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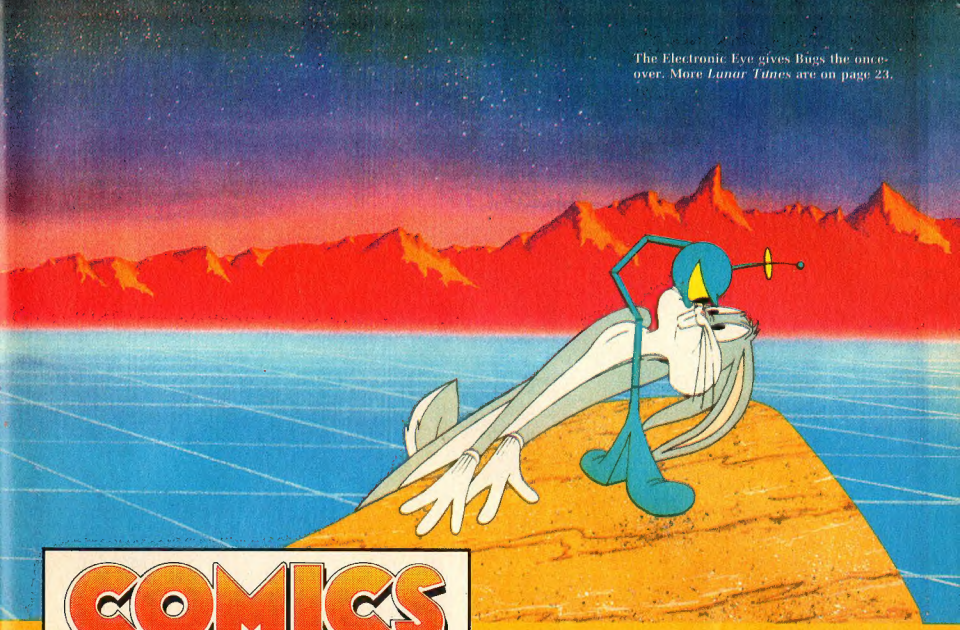

The Electronic Eye gives Bugs the once-over. More *Lunar Tunes* are on page 23.

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BLAZING SPIRITS

Art: Mark Texeira

Art: Andy Kubert/Joe Kubert

Both *Spirits of Vengeance* writer Howard Mackie and John Blaze know that "Ghost Rider's *not* a real easy guy to be friendly with."

Mackie feels the artwork has been instrumental in making the new Ghost Rider's run so successful.

When Ghost Riders ride, Howard Mackie's at the wheel.

By MIKE McAVENNIE

The cycle of the Ghost Rider renews itself again this summer, and *Ghost Rider* alumnus Johnny Blaze is now along for the ride. Hotter than hell, this unlikely Butch and Sundance are the *Spirits of Vengeance*, and heating up their trail is *Ghost Rider* scribe Howard Mackie.

Why team up these uneasy Riders? "Well, I had brought Johnny Blaze back into *Ghost Rider* [issues #13-#17] and the readers' response was very good," recalls Mackie (who previously discussed *Ghost Rider* in CS #12). "The mail and the sales went up every time he appeared in the book, and quite frankly, I enjoy writing the character. He was the character I initially was interested in as a fan of the *Ghost Rider* series way back [in the '70s and early '80s].

"I initially thought of doing *Spirits of Vengeance* as a Blaze solo book. Then, just through sitting down and figuring it out—plus various editorial and editorial-*in-chief* input—we decided to go with a book that would feature Ghost Rider and Blaze together. The name *Spirits of Vengeance* seemed like a natural extension of the Ghost Rider mythos."

Readers who may have missed Blaze's run as the flaming-skulled

Art: Adam Kubert

Zarathos might see *Spirits of Vengeance* as just another vehicle for Marvel's current incarnation, an immensely popular hero who—unlike Zarathos—prefers avenging innocent blood rather than spilling it. That isn't the case.

"It's very important for [*Ghost Rider* and *Spirits of Vengeance*] to separate for me. I don't like the idea of just stamping 'Ghost Rider' on a book and doing 'The further adventures of...,' " Mackie laughs. "There was talk at one point of doing another Ghost Rider series, but I wouldn't have been interested in it. There had to be something different to this book for it to interest me, and quite frankly, to interest the fans. From a writer's perspective, to try and continue to do what I'm doing on a monthly basis *twice* a month would get pretty tedious. It's very important to me that *Spirits* has a different twist.

"Obviously, Ghost Rider's in the new book, and part of the thought behind that is to ensure the pulling in of the readership," he continues. "Everybody wants it to sell, obviously, but it *isn't* going to be just another Ghost Rider series. If anything, the focus will be on Blaze seeing things, even Ghost Rider's actions, through the eyes of somebody who has been there before."

Mackie hopes Blaze's role will offer "more of a human twist" to *Spirits of Vengeance*, and to his demonic-looking partner. "With Ghost Rider—at least, up until recently—there were certain limitations as to where I could go with him. That was one of the intriguing parts of teaming him up with Blaze. Quite frankly, I find him to be the more interesting character, and since I came up with *Spirits of Vengeance*, it has now also thrown a whole new spin onto the direction that I'm going in with *Ghost Rider*."

Although no longer Zarathos, Blaze still has a way of attracting mystical energies to himself, Mackie reveals.

As for what direction the Spirits of Vengeance are heading towards, Howard Mackie is making certain that they see all of the U.S. "*Ghost Rider* will still primarily take place, if not in the Brooklyn area, then in the New York area. But the initial reason I liked bringing Ghost Rider into *Spirits of Vengeance* is that, since Blaze now owns the Quentin Carnival [the carnival he worked for in his title], which travels around the country, it allows a change of scenery.

"The storylines in the regular *Ghost Rider* will be separate from those in *Spirits of Vengeance*. *Spirits* will take place in the times that Ghost Rider isn't in Brooklyn or wherever I relocate him. Primarily, Blaze will be traveling with the Quentin Carnival, and Ghost Rider will be there when needed. Obviously, because it is Ghost Rider and Blaze in *Spirits of Vengeance*, he'll be needed in each and every storyline. But there are 30 days in a month, and the book comes out only once a month."

Although most of Ghost Rider's solo adventures will be separate from those taking place in *Spirits of Vengeance*, that doesn't mean there won't be crossovers between the two books, or with other series.

"The first issue of *Spirits of Vengeance*, obviously, is the book's launching," Mackie reveals, "and it'll tie in with the whole 'Rise of the Midnight Sons' storyline, in which we're introducing a new mega-villainess—our Dr. Doom or Magneto, one of the heavy hitters for our corner of the Marvel Universe."

This major character Mackie's talking about, Lilith, is mother to a group of demons called the Lilin. Her powers grow from acts of evil performed by her followers, the Translords, one of whom is Ghost

Art: Andy Kuber/Joe Kubert/Colors: Greg Wright

Events in *Ghost Rider, Spirits* and three new Marvel titles this summer will bring about the "Rise of the Midnight Sons."

Rider's arch-enemy Deathwatch. She's prompted to find and destroy those who make up the Midnight Sons after a vision shows them hanging her Lilin out to dry. As a result, the "Midnight Sons" storyline not only introduces *Spirits of Vengeance*, but three other Marvel titles as well—*Morbius*, *Darkhold* and *Nightstalkers*. The storyline will then wrap up in *Ghost Rider* #31.

"Issues #2 and #3 will still have the 'Midnight Sons' storyline as a subplot, but that storyline will more or less move to the background," Mackie says. "They'll be self-contained stories in which Blaze and Ghost Rider confront some new and old bad guys. I'm looking at [Blaze's] Ghost Rider series and borrowing from that somewhat, because it was something that heavily influenced my decision to do [the current] *Ghost Rider* in the first place."

In addition to introducing new characters, the writer wants to point both heroes towards "something that'll be universal in both books, but that I'll probably deal with more in *Spirits of Vengeance*: They *both* want to learn the origin of the Ghost Rider; Ghost Rider, because he has many unanswered questions, and Blaze, because he wants to know whether or not Ghost Rider's really Zarathos, and if he is, Blaze wants to kill him. So, they'll be going on pretty much a quest for Ghost Rider's origin, and that will lead them into all kinds of situations with many characters that appeared in [Blaze's] *Ghost Rider*."

Speaking of Blaze, Mackie insists that the former stuntcyclist's years as a Ghost Rider have changed him, and not necessarily for the better. "Johnny Blaze has gotten older. Actually, we call him *John* Blaze now, to show that he has gotten older," he offers. "Basically, when I decided to bring him back, I said to myself that this is a guy who had pretty much been to Hell and back, then was done with it and settled down. At the end of the [Blaze *Ghost Rider*], he went off to live happily ever after with the girl of his dreams. My

Art: Adam Kuber.

Let's face it: *Nothing's* going to be easy for these Riders.

All Spirits & Ghost Rider Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991, 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

Ghost Rider's origin is the burning question on everyone's minds.

feeling is that, given his experiences, he would *never* be rid of that part of his life. That would be unrealistic; it would be something that would always nag in the back of his mind. Despite now being a relatively successful businessman—he has the Carnival; he's not a multi-millionaire, but he's comfortable—and having a wife and kids, he still had that part of him possessed by Zarathos. My feeling is that it can't *not* affect you.

"That's all brought to the forefront when he sees the re-emergence of Ghost Rider in the newspapers, and it brings back all these very bad memories. Part of John Blaze doesn't want to get dragged into this whole Ghost Rider thing, and the other part feels he *has* to. That's pretty much where he stands in *Spirits of Vengeance*, too. He doesn't really like the position he has been forced into, but he's not going to be satisfied until he knows conclusively whether or not Ghost Rider is Zarathos."

Needless to say, the duo won't become fast friends in the near future. After all, Blaze tried to extinguish the flame-skulled hero in their first encounter. Besides, as Mackie muses, "Ghost Rider's *not* a real easy guy to be friendly with. You can't go into a little neighborhood bar and have a couple of beers with him. But I do think that in the back of Blaze's mind, he likes having the Ghost Rider near him. This way, he can keep an eye on him and take whatever steps need to be taken if he learns that Ghost Rider isn't what he has been presenting himself as."

Johnny—sorry, *John*—Blaze may not have Zarathos' power anymore, but he certainly has a gift for attracting the supernatural, as Mackie describes him as the equivalent of "a magic magnet."

"Basically, if you go back to his origin, Blaze was a teenager who found a book, drew a pentagram on the floor and summoned Mephisto," he explains. "Mephisto made this deal with Blaze and grafted Zarathos onto him. That didn't totally work for me, so I started playing with it, asking, 'Well, *why* did this happen?'

"What I came up with was that there are reasons why certain things have happened to John Blaze, and that's where I thought of him being a focal point for magic. He's not mystical or magical in and of himself; he has no mystical abilities. But, mystical things are attracted to him, or in a weaker way, *he* is attracted to *them*. So, what we'll see in *Spirits of Vengeance* is that many of the people he has surrounded himself with will have some sort of mystical powers. As a result, the 'bad energy' will also be attracted to him.

"That also explains Blaze's hellfire shotgun," Mackie adds, "but there will be further explanations of that as well. I see the shotgun as a reverse lightning rod. There's something we don't know about John Blaze yet, and something he doesn't know about himself as well. He thinks it's the shotgun, and so does my editor [Bobbie Chase]!' " he laughs.

Being a focal point for magic, combined with his son's kidnapping, prompts Blaze to separate from his family at the end of *Spirits of Vengeance* #1. "That's out of choice," Mackie explains. "His feeling is that given what he has learned about himself, it would be unfair to have his wife and two children with him. I could have done the easier route and had them blown away, and that could have been his reason for being a Spirit of Vengeance. But I really didn't want to do that, being a father of two and happily married," he laughs. "So, that's really Blaze's motivation; he wants to be done with all this garbage so he can get back with his family. And, as long as I'm writing the book, they will *never* be killed."

As for the other half of the Spirits of Vengeance, things haven't been quite the same for him since his human host, Dan Ketch, had his throat torn out by Blackout in *Ghost Rider* #25. As for whether Ketch will live or die, "I'm not gonna even *try* to deceive the readers," Mackie assures. "That wasn't my intention. Dan, despite the fact he had his throat ripped out, has been appearing in the book, which is all part of the 'Midnight Sons' storyline. In issue #28, we learn that Dan's supposed

death is part of the puzzle that leads to the rise of the Midnight Sons, which spins off into the other series within the 'Ghost Rider Universe,' or whatever they're calling it.

"How will this affect Ghost Rider and Dan? It's going to affect them in a *big* way. Both of them are coming out of this storyline as very different characters. With Dan, I originally thought of myself as a teenager growing up in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. I'm not that person anymore, and I was finding it difficult to write Dan as such, so I want to break him out of the mold that I originally cast him in.

"It's the same thing with Ghost Rider," the writer admits. "He started off as a one-dimensional character. I've looked back at some of those early issues I wrote, and I can't believe how many times I used the lines 'Innocent blood has been spilled,' and 'I am the Spirit of Vengeance.' I had created the character as this very monosyllabic individual. I would now like him to be *less* monosyllabic. He'll never be Hawkeye or Spider-Man, and he's not going to be a real punster, but I would like to infuse a little more personality into him and make Dan a little less whiny. I feel like they kind of shifted into neutral for a while, and I would like them both to just start going forward."

Mackie feels *Spirits of Vengeance* has helped him move forward as well, making him "more enthusiastic about doing *Ghost Rider*. To be honest, I felt I had reached a certain plateau with what I could do with him. There are certain events happening right now that are going to change the direction *Ghost Rider* takes, as well as *Spirits of Vengeance*.

"I have the first three issues [of *Spirits of Vengeance*] plotted right now, and I have many ideas. Things have been changing as I've gone along. What I'm going to be doing is kind of a biography of both characters and where I think they're going. I need this for myself as well as for my editor. I'll soon have a direction for *Ghost Rider* up to issue #50, because I *know* what I want to do in that issue already, so I want to start heading there. That will also tie in with some of the *Spirits of Vengeance* stuff."

Art: Andy Kubert/Joe Kubert

Having "shifted into neutral for awhile," Ghost Rider is ready to go forward again.

Discovering Ghost Rider's origins won't be a comfortable ride for either Spirit of Vengeance, Mackie assures.

Along that long and winding road, the duo will certainly face their share of obstacles. "Nightmare is going to figure into both books," Mackie reveals. "As far as I'm concerned, I thought he was one of the neatest characters in the first series. He appears again in *Ghost Rider* #30 and is a big part of the change that takes place with both Dan and Ghost Rider. As for *Spirits of Vengeance*, there's a character named Steel Wind, who's actually an old villain from the [Blaze] *Ghost Rider*, and she'll be coming back into it." Although the writer wants to limit guest stints in *Spirits* for the moment, appearances by Mephisto and the Man-Thing are also in his plans.

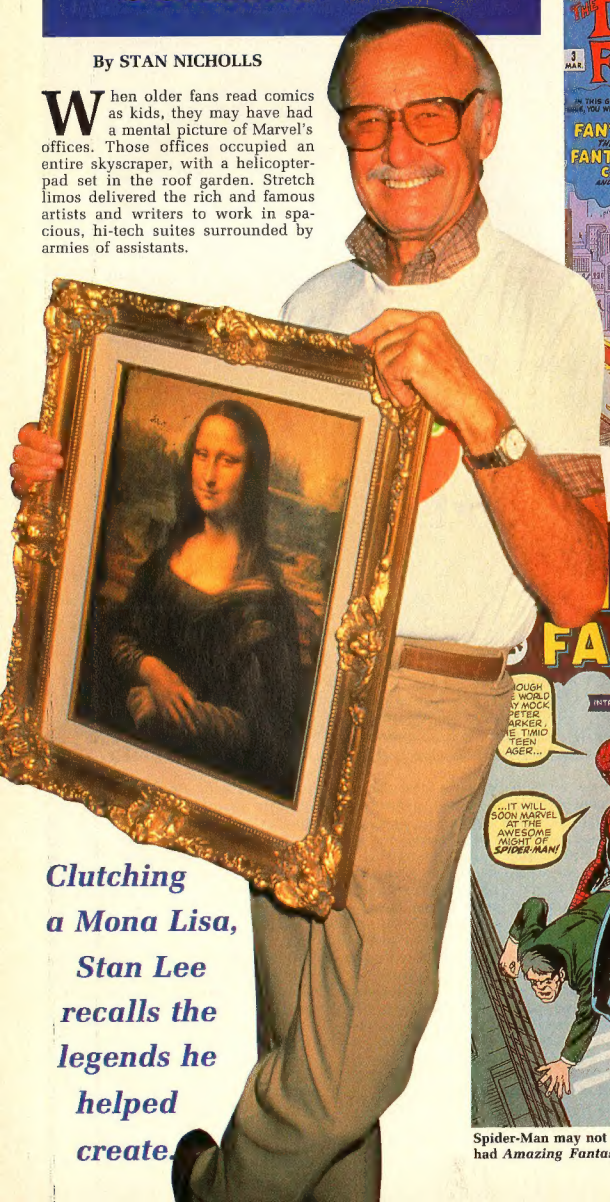
"I *am* bringing back some of the old characters," he stresses, "but I'm really trying to populate both books with *new* characters. I've pretty much killed off almost every character I used or created within the first two years of *Ghost Rider*. Part of it was because I felt I had used the characters as much as they *could* be used, but some of them I thought were really lame. There was the Zodiac character I created, and at the time I thought, 'Wow, what a great idea!' Then, in execution [of the story], I

(continued on page 72)

Comics Man

By STAN NICHOLLS

When older fans read comics as kids, they may have had a mental picture of Marvel's offices. Those offices occupied an entire skyscraper, with a helicopter-pad set in the roof garden. Stretch limos delivered the rich and famous artists and writers to work in spacious, hi-tech suites surrounded by armies of assistants.



Clutching a Mona Lisa, Stan Lee recalls the legends he helped create.

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Art: Jack Kirby/Colors: Glynis Oliver

Stan Lee didn't think his *Fantastic Four* was so fantastic at first. "I was just getting it out of my system."

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Art: Jack Kirby & Steve Ditko

Spider-Man may not have webbed his way into comics history had *Amazing Fantasy* not been eyeing cancellation.

Stan Lee shatters *that* illusion: "It was 100 percent diametrically opposed to that image. We had a *tiny* office. My space was no bigger than a cubbyhole. Most of the creators were freelancers and worked at home. There were no limos; we took the subway or walked. Nobody made much money in those days. It was not a well-paid profession.

"But we all had fun doing what we did. That part of it was true. There was a lot of kidding around. But there was also a lot of tension because we lived with deadlines. A book would be due on the 15th of the month, and here it was the 12th and we hadn't even started drawing it yet. If a book was late, it was very serious, because the publisher paid for the printing time in advance, which would be something like $20,000. If the book wasn't ready, he still had to pay the money. So, we lived under this tremendous pressure, turning out so many titles a month with a limited number of artists and writers. It was a combination of fun and never-ending tension—a bit like a college dormitory."

Lee entered the industry when he was 16, in 1940, as an assistant to Joe Simon and Jack Kirby on *Captain America* at Timely. "I had worked before, believe it or not. While I was still at school, I wrote obituaries for the Associated Press. But I got tired of it; it was very depressing. Then, I wrote publicity releases for a hospital, and I never could understand what I was supposed to be achieving. Were we trying to convince people to get sick so they would go to that hospital?

"Then, I saw an ad in the paper for an assistant at Timely. I never thought it would be a steady job. In those days, comics were *nothing*, they weren't thought of highly at all. My attitude was, 'Well, it's a living. I'll learn about publishing, then get out into the real world.' "

Instead, a year later, he was editing the company's entire line. "Shortly after I went there, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby left," Lee recalls, "and it was such a small outfit I was about the only fellow left. The publisher said, 'Can you handle things until I hire a real adult human being?' When you're 17, what do you know? So, I said, 'Sure, I can do it.' Everybody forgot about me from that point on, and as far as I know, they're still looking for the replacement!"

Shortly afterward, he legally changed his name. "I started using the name Stan Lee because I felt I didn't want to use my real name, Stanley Martin Lieber. I was saving that for the Great American Novel I was going to write. I'm sorry I did it, because Stan Lee is such a dumb name. People say, 'What's your name?' I say, 'Stan Lee.' And they say, 'Stanley what?' I'm thinking of changing it to 'What.' "

By the late '50s, with the comics business moribund, Lee contemplated a career change. "Oh, I was considering that *all* the time," he says. "I got married when I was about 25, and I kept thinking, 'Now I'm an adult and a married man; how can I be in the comic book industry?' I would say to my wife, 'After the New Year, I'll quit.' Then, I would get a raise or we would publish some books I would be interested in and I would say, 'Next year, I'll quit.' I was always aiming to leave and write that Great American Novel or a movie script.

"But in 1960, I finally, *really* said I was going to quit. My wife Joan said,

12¢
JOURNEY INTO
MYSTERY
85
OCT.
I CHALLENGE YOU TO MATCH YOUR POWERS AGAINST MINE, THOR!
NEVER BEFORE HAS SIR MIGHTY THOR FACED SO DANGEROUS AN FOE AS
LOKI THE GOD OF MISCHIEF!!
TAKE THESE THOR JOURNEYS INTO MYSTERY ON THIS GROUP ISSUE...
FILBERT'S FRIGHTFUL FUTUREY
"OFF-LIMITS!"
IT IS OK... MY SWORN ENEMY! HE HAS FOUND ME AT LAST!

Art: Jack Kirby/Dick Ayers

Writing events such as Thor and Loki's fights were often noisy for Lee's wife.

'All these years you wanted to do stories the way you wanted to do them. You're going to leave anyway; what have you got to lose? Do it your way and the worst that will happen is they'll fire you.' So, I brought out *The Fantastic Four* [with artist Jack Kirby].

"I tried to make the *FF* what I thought of as more realistic, with the characters acting toward each other the way real people might. For instance, instead of the girl being a token female in love with the male though she doesn't know he's really a hero, she was his fiancée, she knew damn well who he was, and she was also a member of the team. She wasn't some helpless girl always screaming, 'Save me!' "

Ben Grimm, the Thing, remains one of Lee's all-time favorite characters. "The way he came about was we had the good-looking hero, a young boy who's also good-looking, and the girl; what about a real ugly guy who's a humorous, sympathetic monster? I loved having him argue and fight with the Torch, and tell Reed [Richards] he was the world's biggest bore, and why can't he use *one* word instead of 20? I liked Ben because he was grumpy and irascible. Kind of like me," he says.

At the time, Lee thought *The Fantastic Four* was nothing special. "I was just getting it out of my system. I thought I would be fired. Then, the sales figures came in and it sold so well my publishers said, 'Make up something else.' So, the next one was *The Hulk*, which did pretty well, and they said, 'Do another.' That was *Spider-Man*, and we were off and running."

Spider-Man, the character with which Lee and artist Steve Ditko are most closely associated, was almost still-born. Publisher Martin Goodman wasn't keen on the idea.

"That's true," Lee confirms. "He said, 'You can't make a hero out of a spider. People hate spiders.' When I told him I wanted Spider-Man to be a 17-year-old, he said, 'You can't let a teenager be a hero. Teenagers are sidekicks.'

"I always hated that idea. I felt that the publishers—not just mine, but all of them—were much too simplistic in their thinking. They believed that if you're doing stories for children, you had to have a child as one of the main characters so the reader can empathize. But when I was young, I read *The Odyssey*, and there was no teenage sidekick in that; Robin Hood, Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes didn't have teenage sidekicks. The only teenage sidekick I could think of was Robin, with Batman, and I *hated* Robin. I used to think if I were a full-grown superhero, why would I want to pal around with a teenager? People would talk. It's ridiculous.

"So, I had to wait until we had a magazine that was about to be discontinued [*Amazing Adult Fantasy*]. When you're going to drop a title, nobody cares what you put in the last issue, so I sneaked Spider-Man into that and forgot about it. A few months later, we realized it was the biggest-selling book we ever had. Then, [publisher] Martin Goodman said to me, 'That idea we both liked, Spider-Man, let's make a series of it!' "

To what does Lee attribute Spider-Man's appeal? "Several things. He was always soliloquizing—because,

All Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, X-Men, Silver Surfer, Thor & Associated Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

Lee's favorite Thing, Ben Grimm, is "grumpy and irascible. Kind of like me."

Art: Jack Kirby/Joe Sinnott

Art: John Buscema

The writer caused more ripples in Marvel history with *Silver Surfer*.

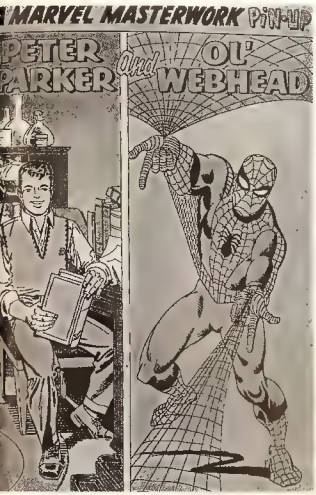
of course, there was nobody else for him to talk to. That was one of the things that made the readers like him. You felt you knew him much more than another character who's saying, 'There goes the crook, I had better catch him before he gets away.' With Spider-Man, you knew what he was worried about and dreaming of.

"Then again, there was my effort to be realistic. You had to accept that a guy could be bitten by a radioactive spider and crawl up walls, *but*, assuming there were such a person, what would his life be like in the real world? What would happen to his school work, his family? Would he have to make a living? Wouldn't he still worry about acne, dandruff, ingrown toenails, allergy attacks? Suddenly, you had a hero with personal problems. You never read of Superman or Batman having personal problems—not until after *our* books became popular, that is."

A believable background for the plots was important, too. "I lived in New York, and most of the artists and writers did, so by basing the stories there, we could make everything as realistic as possible. When characters went to the movies, they didn't go to the Bijou, they went to Radio City Music Hall. Peter Parker lived in Forest Hills, Tony Stark had his mansion on Fifth Avenue, facing Central Park. They lived in New York; they didn't live in Gotham City, Metropolis or any other phony place."

Among *Spider-Man*'s achievements over 30 years, Lee adds, was the part the title played in helping to liberalize the Comics Code following the anti-drugs story in issues #96-98. "What happened was I had a letter from the Office of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington D.C., suggesting we do an anti-drugs story. Well, I don't like to lecture or seem as though I'm preaching, so I wove the theme into a regular story. In its course, I had a friend of Spider-Man's overdose on something. I've never taken drugs, and know less about them than anybody, so I couldn't get too technical. But I had read that when you take a trip, sometimes you think you can fly. So, this character was on the edge of a roof, and Spider-Man of course saves him just in time, and gives him a little lecture.

"When I sent the book to the Comics Code Authority, they said, 'You can't use these stories because they mention drugs.' I said, 'But they're not telling the kids to *take*



Art: Steve Ditko

Publisher Martin Goodman was originally less than thrilled with Lee for making a teenager dressed as an icky spider a superhero.

Lee and Jack Kirby fathered Marvel's merry mutants, the X-Men.

THE STRANGEST SUPER-HEROES OF ALL!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
1 SEPT
IND
the X-MEN
FIRST ISSUE!
IN THE SENSATIONAL FANTASTIC FOUR STYLE!
X-MEN VERSUS MAGNETO EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER VILLAIN!

Art: Jack Kirby/Sol Brodsky

drugs. I did this because a branch of the federal government asked me to.' 'Sorry, you can't mention drugs.' So, I figured these people were crazy and ran the stories without the seal. But it turned out pretty good. After that, the Authority got a little more lenient. They realized that just mentioning the word drugs isn't bad if you're doing it in the right way, if you're telling kids *not* to take them.

"Actually, without the seal, the books sold better. You see, we never really needed that seal. People ask if I've felt inhibited by the Code, and I say no. There was nothing they wanted us to do that I wouldn't have done anyway. The Code stipulated that we shouldn't be too sexy or too violent, or insult established institutions. I had no intention of doing any of those things.

"I remember sending a copy of *Kid Colt Outlaw* to the Authority once, containing a scene where a cowboy shoots at somebody. There was a panel showing a close-up of a hand shooting the gun in profile. Coming out of the barrel was a puff of smoke and a line indicating the bullet's trajectory. We got that page back from the Code as objectionable. They said the panel couldn't be used because it was too violent. The puff of smoke was too big. I gave it to an artist and told him to make the puff smaller, and they said that was fine. I thought, 'This is insanity.' But, beyond a few funny stories like that, the Code didn't bother us."

Art: John Romita

Readers were shocked when Lee revealed Webhead's secret to the Green Goblin in *Amazing Spider-Man* #39.

Asked to account for his success as a comics creator, Stan Lee cites versatility. "A story is a story," he says. "In a mystery you write, 'Follow that car!' In a Western, you say, 'Follow that stagecoach!' In a mystery, you say, 'Put down that gun, you rat!' In a Western, it's, 'Drop that gun, hombre!' You have a guy who wants to do something bad, you have a hero who wants to stop him. Either he rides a horse or he rides a car; he wears a cowboy hat or he wears a cap. I wrote everything: Romance stories, Westerns, humor, war stories, on and on. I didn't consider myself a war story writer or a Western writer. I never thought, 'Gee, now I've got to write a science fiction story.' You just did it. Whatever had to be written, you wrote.

"But I think you have to believe it when you're writing it. Or you have to *imagine* that you believe it. When I read Sherlock Holmes, I knew he was a fictitious character, but I believed in him. I knew there was no Tarzan, but while I was reading it, I worried about him; I hoped the lion didn't eat him up. I think we all do that. It's the same when you write it.

"In fact, not only did I believe in it, but my wife used to come in when I was writing and she would say, 'Who are you talking to?' We would laugh because I would be saying things out loud. If Dr. Doom was talking, I would be writing, 'Oh no you don't, Richards!' and acting it out. If I was doing *Thor*, I would be Odin, and say, 'Thou shalt not, and I have spoken!' I got into the mood of the thing all the time."

Stan Lee is, of course, no longer involved in the daily operation of Marvel's comics. "I spend all my time on the movie and TV projects," he says. "I live in Los Angeles and work with producers, directors and screenwriters, which is incredibly glamorous and exciting to me. All the people I've read about all my life I now meet, like Francis Ford Coppola, people like that.

"As you probably know, there may be a *Spider-Man* movie. Then, we're going to do an *X-Men* movie, and ones about the *Black Panther*, *Elektra Assassin* and *Iron Man*. Three companies want to do *Daredevil*, and we're talking to all of them. One wants to do it as a TV series, the other two as a movie.

"But, whatever I'm doing," Stan Lee says, "the thing I like most is to be busy. It doesn't matter what you're doing as long as you have a lot to do. Boredom must be the worst thing in the world."

Marked Man Cover: Courtesy Doug Ellis

The Bat Man Time Forgot

His dark, wing-like cape also terrified criminals in 1939, but who fears the Black Bat today?

By WILL MURRAY

When Bob Kane and Bill Finger labored over the creation of the Batman one weekend early in 1939, they little dreamed that a prolific pulp writer was simultaneously hard at work on a new series of novels featuring a character who would be a virtual mirror image of their own. And had they known, they might have been forced to junk their seminal creation and literally go back to the drawing board for an entirely different concept.

In an industry that has seen many uncanny creative coincidences, the twin sagas of the Batman and the Black Bat must be the most incredible.

One of the most popular pulp series of the 1940s, the Black Bat has been forgotten by all but ardent pulp collectors—and his creator. One of the most prolific writers of pulp heroes in the tradition of The Shadow, Norman A. Daniels has been erroneously credited with ghost writing *Doc Savage*, a series he says he had nothing to do with. But as a freelancer for Leo Margulies' Better Publications, Daniels often penned the exploits of their most famous character, the Phantom Detective, and created others like the Masked Detective and the Crimson Mask, all under pen names.

"There was hardly *any* difference between them," says the 84-year-old Daniels, now retired and living in California. "The Phantom was a little bit different. It wasn't quite as fantastic."

In 1938, despite growing competition from comic books, pulp heroes were still the rage and publishers busily competed to create new ones.

"Leo asked me to think of something to compete with *The Shadow*," Daniels recalls. "I came up with this character I

Captains Cover: Courtesy Chuck Jusek

Treason Cover: Courtesy Chuck Jusek

Murder Calls Cover: Rudolph Belarski/Courtesy Chuck Jusek

Crushing Nazi spies wasn't enough for the Black Bat. After the war, he *literally* conquered Germany.

That other caped crusader may have beaten him to print, but the Black Bat was always quicker on the draw.

called the Tiger because in the initial episode, the hero had been doused with acid. His face was lined like a tiger's."

Daniels' new character was District Attorney Tony Quinn—this was before the famous actor of the same name—who, after losing his sight and suffering tiger-stripe scars around his eyes, goes into seclusion. A mysterious woman offers him an opportunity to regain his sight and get back at the criminals who blinded him. Quinn agrees to an experimental eye transplant. When he emerges from the operation, Quinn discovers that his new eyes give him catlike night vision. Donning black clothing and a black hood to hide those telltale scars, he straps a pair of automatics on his hips and goes after his tormentors.

Leo Margulies liked Daniels' first novel, but he demanded one minor but very fateful revision.

"He wanted to change the Tiger to the Black Bat because he wanted it to go into *Black Book Detective* magazine," Daniels says.

Margulies might have been thinking of the Bat, a bat-cloaked villain that the Phantom Detective fought only months beforehand. But his inspiration was probably a failed hero called The Bat which Margulies had published in *Popular Detective* back in 1934. That Bat was private detective Dawson Clade who, framed for a murder and "executed" in an inoperable electric chair, retreats to a secluded woodland cabin to plan how to strike back at crime now that he's officially dead. When the shadow of a trapped bat appears on the wall, Clade has an inspiration identical to the one that would seize Bruce Wayne five years later, prompting Clade to cry, "That's it! I'll call myself The Bat." (Wayne's exclamation was, "A bat! That's it! It's an omen . . . I shall become a *bat*!")

Thanks to Lt. McGrath's training, this dog was hardly the Black Bat's best friend.

Dressed in a business suit, this Bat wore a sacklike black hood with a white bat symbol on his forehead. He carried a gas gun and left bat stickers at the scenes of his depredations. His career spanned only four novelettes, each one bylined C.K.M. Scanlon. It's believed that this house pseudonym hid no less than Johnston McCulley, Zorro's famous creator.

Whatever triggered Margulies' suggestion, Daniels' novel was swiftly retitled *Brand of the Black Bat* and the Tiger was changed to the Black Bat. His "catlike" eyes became his "batlike" eyes. And the scene where Quinn explains how he intends to get back at Oliver Snate, the criminal mastermind who ruined his face, was rewritten.

"I want people to think I'm helpless and that I haven't enough interest in life to even have my features mended," Quinn tells his valet, "Silk" Kirby. "We'll operate anonymously. No one must know who we are. I'll have to wear a mask, of course—a complete hood, I suppose, if my features are as bad as that doctor said they were."

"Yes, sir," Kirby nodded, "it will have to be a hood. I'll make one, sir, of silk. Black silk, that can't be seen in the night. You can dress in black and be nothing more than a dim shadow in the darkness."

"But there must be some means of identification." Quinn pursed his lips. "Something by which men can recognize me. An insignia—a name, Silk—I have it! I've been blind—as blind as a bat. I am still, so far as anyone knows. I shall prowl during the night. Bats are blind and fly by night. I'll be the bat, Silk. *The Black Bat!*"

Today, Daniels no longer remembers if he made those revisions or if they were undertaken by some anonymous copy editor. But of one fact, he is certain.

"We were the first," he chuckles.

Technically, Daniels is correct. His personal payment records indicate that he was paid for *Brand of the Black Bat* on December 6, 1938—at least two months before Bob Kane created Batman in January 1939. However, Batman was the first character in print, debuting in *Detective Comics* #27, cover-dated May 1939. The Black Bat premiered in the July 1939 issue of *Black Book Detective*.

In keeping with Better Publications' house style, only the Black Bat's hooded face graced most *Black Book Detective* covers. Dressed in his all-black regalia of ribbed cloak and hood and clothes, he strongly resembled Batman. He lacked only a bat emblem on his chest and ears on his hood. Even so, in a dark alley, they could have passed for cousins.

This amazing resemblance hardly went

unnoticed in the editorial offices of Better Publications and DC Comics. As Batman's co-creator, the late Bill Finger, told Jim Steranko in his *History of Comics*, "There was a lawsuit almost pending. Apparently, this character had already been written and on the drawing board. Whit Ellsworth used to be a pulp writer for Better Publications. So, through Ellsworth's intervention, a lawsuit was averted. They were ready to sue us and we were ready to sue them. It was just one of those wild coincidences."

Whitney Ellsworth was the first official *Batman* editor. He later hired one of the early Black Bat editors, Mort Weisinger, to replace him. One of the first Batman writers Weisinger hired was Charles Green, who had written Phantom Detective novels for him, including the one featuring the villainous Bat. In yet another twist, Weisinger later brought Jack Schiff over from Better to replace him on *Batman* when Weisinger was drafted. Schiff—who had edited the original Bat series in *Popular Detective*—was the man who gave Weisinger his first editorial job at Better, back in 1933. None of these musical-chair switches had anything to do with the creation of Batman or the Black Bat.

For his part, Daniels was unaware of the nearly averted legal collison. "I knew nothing about that," he states. "That was all done in the office. They never told me anything about it. They never asked my advice."

Both firms agreed to ignore the problem. Batman went on to great popularity. The Black Bat's success, while more modest, was nevertheless impressive by pulp magazine standards. He dominated *Black Book Detective* in stories such as *The Black Bat's Crusade*, *The Faceless Satan*, *The White Witch*, *Without Blood They Die* and 62 other novels. Daniels wrote all but seven of them.

The early Black Bat novels were in the classic pulp tradition. Quinn fought vicious master criminals and Nazi spies with his blazing automatics. Superstitious criminals thought him unkillable, and believed he could fly. They cowered at the sight of his batlike outline, or at the bat stickers he left on the foreheads of criminals he destroyed. But Quinn's true nemesis was Police Lieutenant McGrath, who suspected Quinn's secret and kept trying to prove he could still see. No loner, Quinn was aided by the trio of Silk Kirby, ex-boxer Butch Leary and Carol Baldwin, the mysterious woman who gave Quinn back his sight. The transplanted eyes had belonged to her murdered police officer father, another victim of Oliver Snate.

As the years went on, and Batman's villains grew increasingly more bizarre, the Black Bat's foes became more realistic. Invisible crooks and voodoo masters like Dr. Zuro gave way to more plausible organized criminals. A turning point in the series was *Markets of Treason*, where McGrath presents Quinn with a seeing-eye dog named Gwendolyn. Quinn learns the hard way that Gwendolyn is trained to attack anyone wearing a batlike cape. And so, Quinn was forced to abandon his signature cloak.

When *Black Book Detective* was cancelled in 1953, the Black Bat disappeared from American newsstands, and with his wife, Dorothy, Daniels turned to writing paperback books and never looked back. He was all but oblivious to Batman's continued success.

"I've *never* seen one," he says of the *Batman* comics. "I never had anything to do with them, and I never bothered with them."

Neither does Daniels suffer any pangs of regret that it wasn't his character that went on to become a household word. And he makes surprisingly little of the marked similarities between the Black Bat and Batman.

"I can't see very much of a connection between the two," he genially allows. "I

(continued on page 74)

Pulp publishers forced the mystery men to stick to the shadows. With only their masked faces in the background, one hero's cover could be reused as another's.

Dragon Trail Cover: Courtesy Will Murray

Lakeside Mystery Cover: Courtesy Chuck Juzek

Appearances to the contrary, Black Bat's creator Norman A. Daniels "can't see very much of a connection between" Batman and his own darknight detective.

"The Ladies or the Tiger" could have been the title for this pulp, if not for a publisher's fascination with bat imagery.

Missing Millions Cover: Rudolph Belarski/Courtesy Victor Berch

All Black Bat Art: Copyright 1933, 1934, 1939, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1947, 1949 Better Publications, Inc.

All Batman Returns Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1992 DC Comics Inc./Courtesy Warner Bros. Inc.

Batman (Michael Keaton) returns to greet his creator, Bob Kane.

Mark of the Bat

More than 50 years ago, Bob Kane introduced that hero of the night, Batman.

By WILL MURRAY

The Penguin (Danny DeVito) is easily one of the fowlest fiends Kane ever created.

Long ago, in January 1939, Bob Kane was toiling in the fledgling comic book industry, drawing humor strips such as Peter Pupp, Professor Doolittle and Rusty and his Pals for *Adventure Comics* and other pioneer DC titles. Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, had energized *Action Comics*' sales the previous year and *Detective Comics* editor Vince Sullivan invited Kane, then only 18, to try something new. "Vince said, 'Do you think you could come up with another superhero?' " Kane recalls.

Over a weekend, Kane sketched out a character who would emulate Superman, but not copy him. After a false start or two, he came up with a character he thought might work. He called him "The Bat-Man."

But what made Bob Kane opt for a mysterious masked crimefighter who lurked in the shadows and dealt out grim justice to street criminals—the very antithesis of the colorful Superman? And why a bat, a traditional symbol of death? Why not an eagle or a hawk?

"I was really inspired by three influences for Batman," Kane explains. "One was Leonardo DaVinci. He had [designed] a flying machine 500 years ago. It was a man on a sled with bat wings, the first glider. DaVinci's *Book of Inventions* had the very sketch I'm talking about. And his quote on that bat glider was, 'Your bird shall have no other wings but that of a bat.' I saw that sketch when I was 13 and to me, it looked like a bat-man.

"My second influence was a movie

called *The Mark of Zorro*, with Douglas Fairbanks Sr. And there I got the dual identity. Zorro was kind of a foppish playboy. At night, he became a crusader fighting against injustice in the old Spanish West. He would don a stocking mask with two slits for the eyes and he had a sword that would imprint a 'Z' across the desperado's head when he would duel with them. I was influenced by Fairbanks' swashbuckling, derring-do deeds.

"The third influence was a movie [based on a novel] by Mary Roberts Rinehart, a mystery writer," Kane adds. "It was called *The Bat Whispers*, with Chester Morris. The Bat was a villain, but he wore a bat costume. You would see shadows of the Bat throughout, but at the very end, it revealed him in his Bat costume, which wasn't too unlike my bat costume later."

Before Kane submitted his idea to Sullivan, he showed it to his friend and sometime collaborator, neophyte comics writer Bill Finger, who made certain contributions that greatly focused the character, such as suggesting that instead of bat wings, Batman should wear a batlike cloak.

When Kane presented Sullivan with the fully-realized Bat-Man—as he was styled in his first appearance in *Detective Comics* #27, May 1939—the DC editor was very receptive.

"He flipped," Kane recalls. "He said, 'This is it!' "

And so was born a legend (which Kane discussed in CS #6, #7 & #27) and one of the most fruitful writer-artist collaborations in comics history. As Kane's employee, Finger scripted the early Batman episodes, co-creating with Kane Batman's true identity of Bruce Wayne, Commissioner Gordon, Robin and a gallery of villains. It was also Finger who conceived Batman's origin, which was not revealed until *Detective* #33.

Although it was many years before Finger's contribution to the Batman mythos became known outside of the industry, Kane recalls Finger, who died in 1974, with respect.

"He brought a great deal of the early pulp writing style to Batman," Kane remembers. "I really feel he's the unsung hero of Batman."

Now, more than a half-century later, Kane's hero is the star of a cottage industry that employs countless writers and artists to create new comic-book adventures. There is merchandising from toys to T-shirts, an upcoming animated series on Fox (see CS #29) and of course, the new film, *Batman Returns*.

And Bob Kane, looking back, is happy with the way life has gone. "All and all, it has been a very lucrative and successful career," he says, "and I have no regrets about it. I only wish Siegel and Shuster fared as well. They were terrific. If not for them, I wouldn't have created Batman nor would there be a comic book industry. Our two creations initiated more than 1,000 superheroes, at least. They're all one offshoot or another of Superman or Batman." CS

Leonardo DaVinci, *The Mark of Zorro* and Mary Roberts Rinehart's *The Bat Whispers* influenced Kane's Dark Knight.

Michelle Pfeiffer is the purr-son behind the Catwoman, a character Kane devised back in 1940.

By MARC SHAPIRO

DARK KNIGHT DREAMS

When "Batman Returns," filmmaker Tim Burton takes a closer look at superheroics.

Director Tim Burton doesn't want his Dark Knight (Michael Keaton) to be "too aware" of everything in *Batman Returns*.

Tim Burton is willing to give *Batman* comics their due. But when he set out to make the *Batman* movies, he basically shoved *Batman* comic books the door.

"We didn't base the characters on *anything* in the comic books," says Burton, a known non-comic book fan. "We went for context, a deeper story and characters that were more psychologically sound."

However, Burton, whose *Batman Returns* is now in theaters, found that attitude only partially successful with 1989's *Batman*.

"I would just keep looking at it and thinking I could have done better," he says. "The first movie is flawed. I hadn't done 100 percent of what I wanted to do with that picture, and part of me wanted another chance."

Burton was given a second bite at it after debating the pros and cons of directing the hero's further adventures, finding a suitable script and developing the psyche of two formidable villains in Catwoman and the Penguin, the director agreed to make a second film.

He admits to taking a great deal of heat with the first *Batman* (which he discussed in CS #8) for making the Joker the top dog and relegating the Dark Knight detective to the back burner, but he warns that anyone who expected a higher profile crime fighter in *Batman Returns* may be disappointed.

"Character-wise, we're *not* trying to up the ante with Batman in this film," he explains. "We're not trying to make him too cynical or too dark. We didn't want to make him too dangerous or too aware. He's just this character dealing with other characters, so he's pretty close to where he was in the first film."

Burton reports that casting went "pretty easy" and that after the first day of filming, once he got over his usual case of nerves, shooting the much-anticipated sequel progressed in a relatively normal manner.

Once the actual filmmaking process began, *Batman* became the normal thing, and everything outside of this movie became frightening and ridiculous," says Burton.

His assessment of the finished film runs to short anecdotal statements. We didn't film anything in the way of real deep character scenes. On a technical level, this movie was much more difficult than the first one. The action process was very specific, so those scenes went a little slower than I would have liked."

The director's eyes light up when describing a sequence in which Catwoman and Batman do battle across the Gotham City skyline. He describes the shoot as "real tight.

"But that was just the surface stuff. Now imagine Catwoman trying to kick the crap out of Batman on an upward-curving roof while wearing six-inch high heels. I've got to hand it to Michelle [Pfeiffer]. She took it upon herself to do all the wire stuff. She had to do and did a better job of selling her scenes than the stunt people."

With two films in the bag, has Batman had its comic book origins wiped from the public consciousness? Burton backpedals somewhat on his non-comic book stance.

"I don't think fans have lost touch with Batman's roots, and I think much of that has had to do with the course Batman has taken in the comics. Beginning with *The Dark Knight Returns* and continuing with each comic since, the writers and artists have used a different style and had a different take on the character. From the reader's point of view, that's a real healthy thing. I'm not plugged into the comic book world, but Batman seems just as vital as ever."

Burton praises Michelle Pfeiffer's ability to "kick the crap out of Batman on an upward-curving roof while standing in four-inch high heels."

Art: Tim Burton

Unlike this sketch, psychological conclusions for the Catwoman weren't so easily drawn by Burton.

Those grey areas remain to be Burton's fondness for the character.

Batman is constantly on the edge. On one side, he's very human, overdresses and all, which is appealing. You never really know when he's going to go off and to which direction. I also like the idea that the villains he invariably goes up against are just as flawed and multi-faceted as he is. It's never a situation where the bad guys are trying to take over the world and it's up to Batman to stop them. There's always a reason that has led the bad guys to want to take over the world, and with Batman, there's always the psychological and emotional feelings he has to deal with and overcome before he can do what's necessary to stop them."

The director, as he did with his previous film, addresses the question of why Robin is once again missing in action. Unlike the first *Batman*, Robin was an active participant in the script's first few drafts.

"We had every intention of Robin being in the movie, but my attitude was that it had to be done right and not just thrown in for the sake of having Robin in the movie," Burton says. "What it finally boiled down to was that we had so many characters in this film whose stories had to be told that we didn't feel this was the time to bring Robin in. There will be time in the future to do it right."

Tim Burton straddles the fence in response to the question of whether he would direct the inevitable third *Batman* film.

"It's hard to say. My movies, Batman movies are a perverse kind of business. Making them is unlike making any other movie. That would weigh on any decision I made to do it again. Right now, I would definitely [illegible] like I did the last time." (A)

The Penguin and his henchmen weren't quite so sketchy for Burton after casting Danny DeVito as the fowl fiend.

Art: Tim Burton

Things like *Batman Returns* freak me are OK with me. My attitude with the Batman movies has always been to try to absorb what I thought was the feel and psychology of Batman. To do that, you have to return to Batman's roots and take the essence of the character before taking him the next step. The comics are stretching the concept of Batman, and I believe that can only be a *healthy* thing."

Still in a comic book frame of mind, Burton draws a parallel between Batman and Superman that he feels occupies both the comic book and movie incarnations.

"Superman is and has always been simply a good vs. evil thing. Batman has never been that cut-and-dried. With Batman, you get a lot of grey areas, and that was a major consideration in developing the script for *Batman Returns*. I wanted the villains to be these weird but interesting characters who could fit into these grey areas in Batman's life."

Selected Animation Art: Courtesy Nancy Beiman, Greg Ford, Terry Lennon

All Warner Tunes Characters & Art: Copyright 1990, 1991, 1992 Warner Bros. Inc.

The New Looney Tunes

Without you, Bugs, Daffy & friends may have no box-office future.

By BOB MILLER

Here's what's up, Doc: Martians kidnap Bugs Bunny! Alien carrots give Daffy Duck Clutch Cargo's lips! Elmer Fudd exposed in his dressing room! These are the latest exploits of the Looney Tunes gang, as they star in *new* cartoons.

"We're here, alive and pushing forward into the '90s," proclaims Kathleen Helppie-Shipley, vice-president of production and administration for Warner Bros. Classic Animation, a separate division from Warner Bros. TV Animation, which produces *Tiny Toon Adventures, Taz-Mania* and the new *Batman* cartoon.

"I believe there's a real craft to animation that's very important for us to maintain," Helppie-Shipley says. "One of the differences between the TV animation group and the classics group is that we're still producing in-house, in this country, with traditional animation methods."

"The whole idea of a Classics Department is the opportunity to continue to make short cartoons," says animation director Terry Lennon. "Producing various things for TV (commercials, public service announcements, rock videos, half-hour specials) enable us to make shorts."

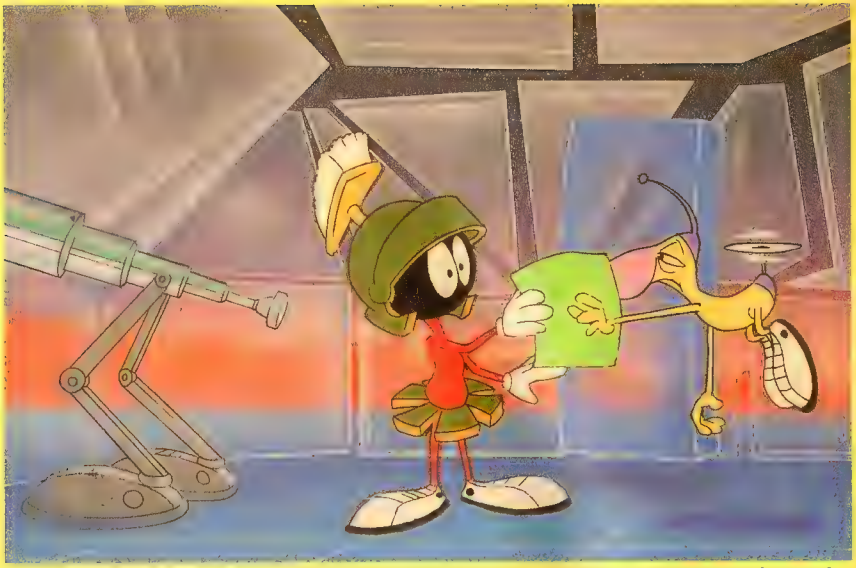
Beiman Photo: Greg Ford

Beiman hopes *Lunar Tunes* gets Bugs and friends out from behind the 8-ball and onto the big screen.

Lennon cites the CBS special, *Bugs Bunny's Creature Features*, as allowing Warners to make a new short, "Invasion of the Bunny Snatchers" (1992). The special contains two other shorts, "The Duxorcist" (1987) and "Night of the Living Duck" (1988), initially made to bridge the classic Warners cartoons in the compilation feature, *Daffy Duck's Quackbusters* (1988).

On *Quackbusters*, Lennon says, "We made two new shorts, with the idea that they could be taken out of the compilation. By making those two shorts, we created a new venue, the half-hour time slot on CBS. But, we were short 10 1/2 minutes. That was the time slot, we needed to make a new short. So, that completed the half-hour. Now in turn, we can take 'Bunny Snatchers' out of the half-hour time slot and it can be shown theatrically, on home video or, eventually, on Saturday morning."

Adding one's own creative input to established classic characters can be challenging, as director Darrell Van Citters reports. "There's always a fine line when you try to put your own sensibility into something. Sometimes you would like to go further than the company would be comfortable with. It's a tricky line making the



Director Nancy Beiman and Marvin the Martian look to "recapture" the classic *Looney Tunes* spirit with *Bugs Bunny's Lunar Tunes*.

corporation happy with what you do as well as trying to stretch things.

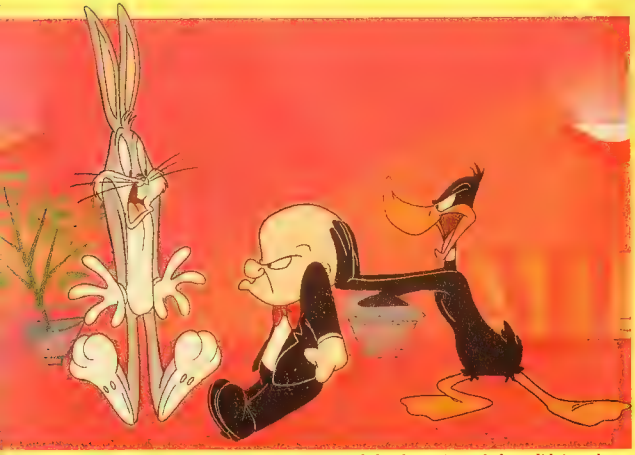
"The creators of those characters did such a good job on giving the personalities depth, that it's not that difficult to work from them. You've got a real good foundation, so that you know how a character would react during a certain situation."

An example of a " '90s situation"? Try Van Citters' "Rock-a-bye Rabbit," in which Yosemite Sam (voiced by Maurice LeMarche) has a baby daughter.

Helppie-Shipley reveals, "We went through several different versions of what Mrs. Sam would be like, going from gorgeous to not-so-gorgeous to Sam incarnate on the female side. It just wasn't working. I mean, *who* would marry Yosemite Sam? That would have become more of the story.

"The situation seemed a natural," Van Citters notes, "Here's a guy who's frustrated so easily. What is more frustrating than a child? It just seemed like a good idea, to put Bugs (voiced by Greg Burson) in there to play off of whatever the baby does to Sam. It works pretty well."

"We aren't slavishly trying to imitate the old cartoons. That's too easy a trap to fall into," says Nancy Beiman, director of *Bugs Bunny's Lunar Tunes*, the yet-to-be-aired CBS special. "We're trying to recapture their spirit, where we're out to make an entertaining and funny picture—one that isn't strictly aimed at children but will amuse them anyway."



Director Darrell Van Citters is disappointed that his animated short didn't make Bugs a strong "Box Office Bunny" again.

After Warner Bros. closed its animation studio in 1969, an editorial department serviced the animation library of shorts made from 1948-64 (The pre-1948 shorts had been sold to MGM, and are now owned by Ted Turner). The post-1948 shorts were divided into several "packages" for TV: One for Saturday morning and the others for syndication. Beginning in the mid-

1970s, CBS commissioned Warners to produce half-hour specials for prime time, each consisting of clips from earlier shorts. For some specials, Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng supplied new animation. The specials' popularity led to the feature-length compilations.

Greg Ford, a film critic, animation scholar and writer for *Rolling Stone*, arranged retrospectives on the classic cartoon directors—Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng and Bob Clampett—for museums in New York, during the late 1960s and early '70s. Impressed by his expertise, Warners hired him to write a compilation feature.

"The first attempt was before *The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Movie* [1979]," Ford explains. "They wanted me to put Yosemite Sam and Tweety and all these characters into a compilation picture. I thought, gee whiz, these characters don't even belong together in the same *frame*. The only contemporary form I could think of to parody would be the disaster films. They had this strange quality of having characters who didn't belong together, like Helen Hayes sitting next to Sid Caesar. I wrote this thing called *Hareport* in 1975. The clip idea was that the characters' lives would flash before their eyes while flying. They hired somebody who wasn't too hot of a film editor to do it, and it looked pretty awful. And so they forgot me for a while."

Meanwhile, Chuck Jones' studio produced *The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Movie*, released to an enthusiastic response. Impressed, Warner Bros. reopened the studio for new production in April 1980. Freleng produced and directed three compilation features: *Friz Freleng's Looney Looney Looney Bugs Bunny Movie* (1981), *Bugs Bunny's 3rd Movie: 1001 Rabbit Tales* (1982), and *Daffy Duck's Movie: Fantastic Island* (1983).

From *The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Movie* and continuing through Freleng's features, Terry Lennon progressed from assistant animator to animator. After *Fantastic Island*, Lennon left to supervise at Marvel Productions, returned to Warners in 1985 and later teamed with Greg Ford to direct *Quackbusters*.

Says Ford: "I'm a writer who wished he could draw really well, and Terry is a great animator who wants to get into story, and so we ended up co-directing."

Ford recalls that "Terry and I happened to be in charge of directing at the point where it changed from people who actually *made* cartoons to people who grew up *watching* the cartoons. It was a *fait accompli*. We thought it would be more interesting

Lennon Photo: Courtesy Terry Lennon

Putting the *Looney Tunes* characters through their paces is animation director Terry Lennon.

to make new shorts using the compilation film as a pretext.

"We worked very hard to make the compilation film work as well," Ford adds. "The idea up to that point was to create a standard generic Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck and just work those into introducing the clips. What Terry and I tried to do very self-consciously was to create an *evolving* duck within the cartoon, so the style changed depending upon the material being bridged."

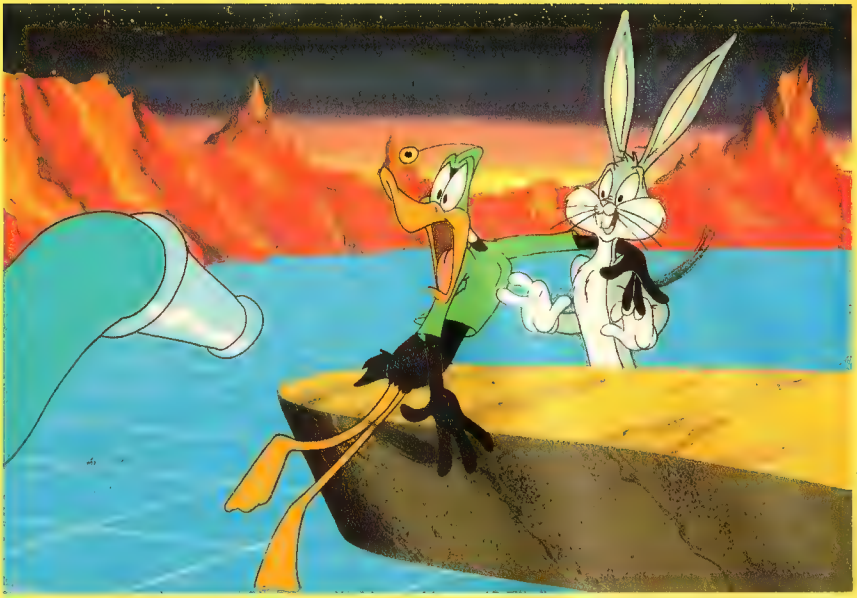
Lennon points out that "in *Quackbusters*, we had four or five different ducks that we were working with, and we were very careful working in and out certain pre-existing cartoons. When we were working out of 'Daffy Dilly' and into 'The Prize Pest,' it was like working with two different ducks. But Mark Kausler did the new animation for it, and he just nailed it. You *really* have to look long and hard to tell where it separates."

Ford and Lennon used the money budgeted for the compilation film to make two new shorts, "The Duxorcist" and "Night of the Living Duck." These were written "like a jigsaw puzzle" and designed to fit into *Quackbusters*. "Duxorcist" starred Daffy Duck as a "Paranormalist-at-large," a parody of *Ghostbusters*. In "Night of the Living Duck," Daffy performs at a night club of famous monsters, singing with Mel Torme's voice. "Duxorcist" (CS #2) was completed first and released in 1987 to favorable critical response.

Before *Quackbusters*, Ford teamed up with Tom Gammil and Max Pross (writers for *Late Night with David Letterman*) to script the hour-long *Bugs Bunny/Looney Tunes 50th Anniversary Special* (NBC, January 1986). The executive producer was Lorne Michaels; the director, Gary Weis, both from *Saturday Night Live*. Chuck Jones even directed some new animation for the show. Ford describes the special as "a weird mix of twisted cartoon history and '80s sitcom writing": Celebrity guests talk to the camera and discuss their experiences with Bugs and Daffy.

"Ironically, in one segment, we had Billy Dee Williams selling this record called *Carl Stalling's Greatest Hits*, Volume 6. 'Whenever I'm in a romantic mood, I put on Carl Stalling.' " Ford laughs. "We started getting calls: 'Hey, where can I get the

Deciding the verdict on *Lunar Tunes* are some far-out space nuts, including a logical pointy-eared alien.



Animation, Nelson Rhodes

***Lunar Tunes* surprise witness Duck Dodgers arrives to help Bugs defend their planet. Goodbye, Earth.**

other volumes?' People were *really* interested, as interested as we were."

Thus, record producer Hal Willner and Ford initiated *The Carl Stalling Project*. With Warners' approval, they researched the studio vaults to locate the music tracks, aided by film editor Rick Geer and Warners archivist Mike O'Hara. When *The Carl Stalling Project* was released in 1990, "We were very surprised that it was commercial," says Ford, who's now preparing a new edition of Stalling's music.

One of the animators on *Quackbusters* was Darrell Van Citters, a Cal Arts graduate who had worked his way up to a director's position at Disney, and was involved with an earlier version of *Roger Rabbit*. He left that project and Disney in 1986. For the next three years, he worked as an independent. His first project for Warner Bros. was a Coyote and Road Runner Hershey's commercial, directed by Mark Kausler. In 1989, Van Citters joined the company as creative director, overseeing "still art" for licensing.

Van Citters started an animation unit in Burbank to direct commercials, as well as a new Bugs Bunny short, "Box Office Bunny," to celebrate the wabbit's 50th birthday. According to Van Citters, "The cartoon was sold with a one-line synopsis: Someone builds a movie cineplex over Bugs Bunny's hole and he retaliates. Elmer Fudd happened to be the guy he retaliated against, since he was the authority figure, the theater usher.

"It took awhile to get it off the ground, but once the OK was given, it was very exciting to work on the *first* Bugs Bunny cartoon in almost 30 years," Van Citters says. "But it was put 'in the refrigerator' for six or nine months while the studio tried to figure out what to do with it. They had talked about several different films to release it on, but as each one looked like it wasn't going to do the anticipated box office, they decided not to put our cartoon on it. The film they finally put it on [*The NeverEnding Story, Part II*, released February 1991 in the U.S.], I don't think really showcased the short, anyway."

The director describes his next planned short, "Beach Blanket Bugs," as a *tour de force* for Bugs, as he matched wits with the Tasmanian Devil. But when the TV division began work on *Taz-Mania*, Warners "middle management" decided to cancel the short. Why?

"It became apparent that there probably wouldn't be much interest in seeing a Bugs/Taz short if they were *already* going to have a Taz series," Van Citters says with regret. "Which is unfortunate, because you would have had a lot of fun with this film."

His next project, "Rock-a-bye Rabbit," has been animated but production has been frozen. Additional funding has yet to come from the corporation, now under new management (reluctant to complete projects begun by the old regime).

The director *did* manage to complete a commercial. "Hare Jordan" for Nike premiered during Super Bowl XXVI, featuring Michael Jordan playing basketball with Bugs Bunny. Although Bugs behaved more like Roger Rabbit, this was what the Wieden & Kennedy advertising agency wanted.

Van Citters also developed a short, "No Parking, Martian," starring Marvin the Martian, Porky Pig and Daffy Duck (but *not* as Duck Dodgers) in a spoof of *Blade Runner*. But some executives balked at the idea of Daffy (in the Harrison Ford role) carrying a gun. "No Parking, Martian," in storyboard stage, is still "under consideration."

While Van Citters concentrated on theatrical shorts and commercials, Ford and Lennon handled the TV specials. The duo's first special, *Battle of the Music Video Stars*, aired

on CBS in October 1988. It featured Bugs and Daffy as video DJs, on competing TV stations, playing clips from previous shorts.

"It was Mel Blanc's last work—and it was *good*," Ford speaks as if he were surprised. "It was strange. It was like Mel rallied at the end. I wish he had been that good on 'Duxorcist' and 'Night of the Living Duck,' but you know, the guy had had a stroke. It was a miracle he was alive."

Today, the classic Warners characters are voiced by several actors: Noel Blanc (Mel's son), Greg Burson (also the new voice of Yogi Bear), Jeffrey Bergman (also George Jetson, Mr. Spacely, Barney Rubble and Popeye), who can perform Bugs, Daffy, Elmer and Yosemite Sam; Keith Scott (for Australian PSAs), Joe Alasky (Daffy Duck in *Lunar Tunes*, Plucky Duck in *Tiny Toons*, Yosemite Sam in *Roger Rabbit*), and Maurice LeMarche (Yosemite Sam in "Rock-a-bye Rabbit," Hugh Devil and Daniel Platypus in *Taz-Mania*).

Ford developed the story for a new short, "Invasion of the Bunny Snatchers." He and Lennon recorded a "scratch track" with Bergman, but the studio changed priorities and the team worked on more compilation specials: *Bugs Bunny's Wild World of Sports* (February 1989), *Happy Birthday Bugs: 50 Looney Years* (May 1990) and *Bugs Bunny's Overtures to Disaster* (April 1991).

Ford Photo: Nancy Beiman

"Warners' cartoon characters are always much hipper [than Disney's]," opines animation director Greg Ford.

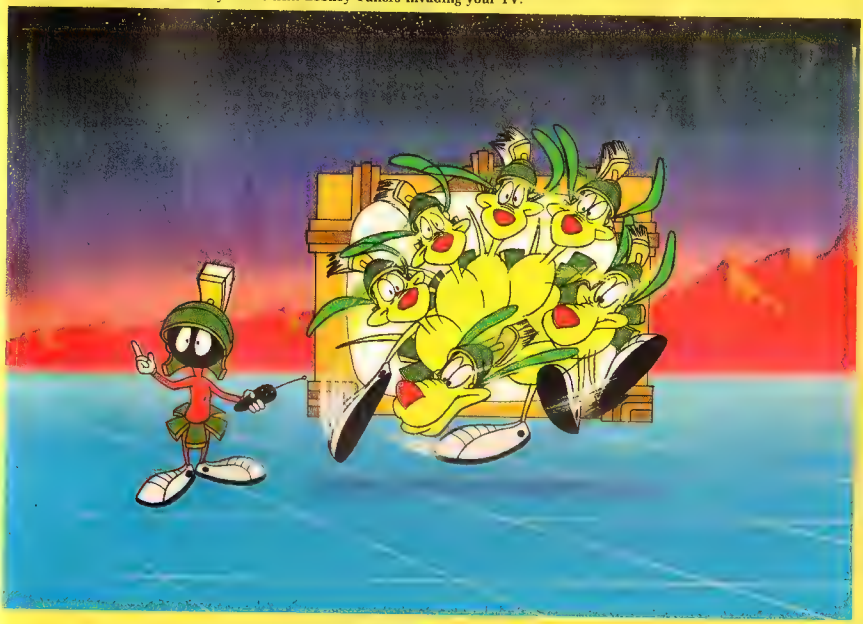
Overtures to Disaster (featuring the classic "What's Opera, Doc?" and "Rabbit of Seville") also contained a new one-minute short that spoofed "The William Tell Overture." Produced and written by Ford, it marked the first time Daffy Duck and Porky Pig were directed by a black man, Dan Haskett, who also served as the principal animator.

In January 1991, Ford hired Nancy Beiman to join his New York unit. Along with Van Citters, she had trained in the character animation program at Cal Arts. In 1986, she and animator Dean Yeagle formed Caged Beagle Productions in New York, where they produced commercials, and subcontracted work for Ford at Warner Bros. In September 1989, Beiman worked in London on *An American Tail II* as a supervising animator (CS #22). At the Ford/Lennon unit, she served as an animator, production designer, storyboard artist—and she became the first woman to direct Bugs Bunny.

Bugs Bunny's Lunar Tunes, a compilation of clips from Bugs' space adventures, featured Marvin the Martian placing Earth on trial, with Bugs (Bergman) defending the planet. The CBS special also featured a surprise guest star: Duck Dodgers.

Beiman says, "He wasn't originally supposed to appear, but I did discuss this with Greg, who produced and wrote it (with Ronnie Scheib). People would be expecting it. It was an extremely funny sequence with Daffy behaving as the ultimate Hollywood egotist, watching his old cartoons and raving about how brilliant they were. In reality, he's on trial for his war crimes against Mars, and the Martians aren't reacting as well as he is to the footage."

Marvin the Martian and K-9 may be the next Looney Tuners invading your TV.



Animation: Jean Pilotte

The unfinished "Rock-a-bye Rabbit" may limit new dad Yosemite Sam's animated life more than the "Invasion of the Bunny Snatchers."

Lunar Tunes differs from the other compilations in that not all the old footage is animation. Neither was there an attempt to connect the old material with new animation.

"The whole point is that it's a trial on Mars," Beiman explains. "The Martians are trying to find legal grounds with which they can blow up Earth. We had Marvin introduce a screen which he runs by operating a video remote control, and the screen conjures up the evidence. So, there's no real reason why there must be animation. No one ever said it *had* to be. So, we wanted, deliberately, as different a color scheme as possible, and a very different look from all of Chuck Jones' Martian pictures."

Meanwhile, Ford and Lennon began their next theatrical short, again with the idea of working the story into a future compilation special. "Blooper Bunny" answers the question, "What are the Looney Tunes *really* like off-camera?"

"The occasion is Bugs Bunny's 51st-and-a-half Anniversary Spectacular," Ford says. "The opening has all of the characters together in this dance in which they're incredibly chummy. It's Bugs, Daffy, Elmer and Sam, the way you can imagine licensing people would *want* you to see the characters all the time."

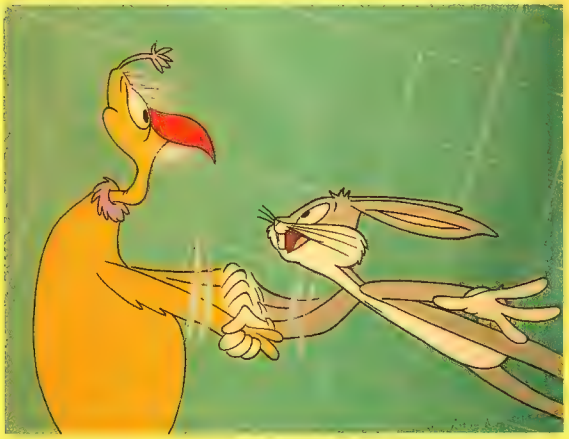
"So, the characters do this little song-and-dance, and no sooner do they start than it's over," Lennon laughs. "The rest of the cartoon is outtakes—what it took to make this thing and what they're like off-stage. On-camera, they've got their big marketing grins on their faces; off-camera, they want to kill each other."

One innovation in the "behind-the-scenes" sequence is the integration of a computer-generated background (done by Bill Kroyer) with conventional animation.

Lennon describes the approach as "a long, continuous shot, as if somebody's walking around with a hand-held video camera, where the point-of-view is moving around, to create that off-screen reality that these characters really have a life."

The candid camera catches Elmer Fudd in his dressing room, using Monoxodil to try to grow hair. Yosemite Sam is filmed yelling and screaming as he's lowered into the anniversary surprise cake. And Daffy is discovered complaining about his one line, "Happy Birthday, Bugs."

According to Ford, "Daffy strikes me as being someone who's constantly complaining about Warner Bros. and the scripts: 'Look at that *!#* that they make me read. What



Beiman wants *Lunar Tunes* to be a departure from Chuck Jones' Martian views.

sort of part is this?' The line that does get laughs is, 'Next thing you know, they'll stick me with three snot-nosed nephews. I wouldn't put it past them.' And the line after that is, 'Warner Bros. doesn't have an original bone in their—' and then he realizes that he's on camera."

Although it upset a few executives, Ford believes that Warners might allow the line to remain. "If they *did* let it in, they would get such a *huge* laugh. It's exactly what Disney would *never* do in a million years, because they're so tight-assed and so worried about their reputation. Warners' cartoon characters are always much hipper.

At one point, Warners scheduled "Blooper Bunny" to be released in August 1991 with the animated *Rover Dangerfield*, but that idea was nixed. Although production on "Blooper" neared completion, the Ford/Lennon crew was reassigned to quickly finish a new special in time for Halloween. Ultimately, CBS decided not to show the special that Halloween—and then, "Blooper Bunny," still unfinished, was itself placed in limbo alongside "Rock-a-bye Rabbit."

Flattening Bugs' look in "Bunny Snatchers" gave Lennon and company "a chance for us to do our worst fear."

Originally titled *Bugs Bunny's Tales from the Duckside*, the Halloween special became *Bugs and Daffy Get Scared* and finally, *Bugs Bunny's Creature Features*. The half-hour special contained "The Duxorcist" and "Night of the Living Duck," plus the new Bugs Bunny short, "Invasion of the Bunny Snatchers."

In "Bunny Snatchers," the Looney Tunes gang must contend with the greatest horror of all: *Bad* animation. It begins with a day in the life of Warners star Bugs Bunny, as he goes through his routine with Elmer Fudd in the morning, flies to the desert to outwit Yosemite Sam in the afternoon and rides a bus to duck-hunting country to go through "pronoun trouble" with Daffy. The next day, Bugs discovers strange carrots from outer space have transformed his opponents into limited-animation zombies. And Bugs is next!

"It was a chance for us to do our worst fear: Reduce these characters down to their lowest common denominator, but at the same time, having a heroic [fully-animated] Bugs interact with them," Lennon says. "We really put Bugs through the paces. At the same time, it was really fun to lovingly explode the characters."

The Ford/Lennon unit was a bicoastal operation, with Ford and Beiman based in New York, and Lennon working at the Burbank facility. Much of the drawing was done by freelance animators throughout America, not just at the Warners studios. The directors provided instructions over the phone and in the form of layouts, storyboards and exposure sheets.

"We had a problem," Beiman reports, "in that there were so many other [Warners] films in production at the same time as 'Bunny Snatchers.' Greg's main animator, Doug Compton (based in New Jersey), was quite busy on 'Blooper Bunny.' Dean Yeagle was on commercials at the time, so I used a few people that I had met out west, Mike Sanger and Nelson Rhodes (from New Mexico), who did superlative work on the film. Mike Kazaleh (from California) did very nice wild animation. And we tried our best to make it entertaining."

In December 1991, Warners shut down its New York animation division to consolidate its operations in Burbank.

Meanwhile, Helppie-Shipley is urging Warners corporate executives

(continued on page 72)

All Captain America Characters & Art: Copyright 1940, 1984, 1965, 1966, 1990, 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

Art: Jack Kirby/Frank Kay/Colors: Richard Howell

Half-a-century ago, Joe Simon & Jack Kirby created a star-spangled wonder named Captain America.

By WILL MURRAY

The legend of Captain America was born in the fury of World War II. At the end of 1940, Europe was suffering under the Nazi advance. America was not yet in the war. Pearl Harbor was a full year away. But most Americans had no doubt that their country would eventually enter the fighting—and virtually all Americans were sympathetic to the Allied cause.

Amid this war hysteria, two men, legends now, but then merely a young comic book artist named Jack Kirby and his editor and frequent collaborator, Joe Simon, decided that America needed a new hero—an unmistakably American hero.

"Superman was already in progress," Jack Kirby recalls. "The world—or at least America—was becoming aware that super-characters were a new vogue. Joe and I looked at it the same way. And we came up with a super-character of our own. Captain America happened to be it. It was a revolutionary concept. We felt it was what the day demanded."

At that time, Simon and Kirby were working for Martin Goodman, publisher of the ancestor of today's Marvel Comics, then called Timely Comics. The company already had two big successes which rivaled National Comics' Superman and Batman. They were the original Human Torch and Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, both offbeat heroes.

Goodman wanted a fresh face, someone who was neither an android nor an amphibian. He put the idea to Joe Simon, his editor and chief writer. Together, they devised the premise—a star-spangled hero who would embody the average American, yet symbolize the best America could be.

Simon took the formative idea for the character he called Captain America to Jack Kirby, and they plunged into work on the first issue. Goodman had such confidence in the concept that he had decided to do something radical: He was going to give Captain America his own title. Comic books were so new in 1940 that the industry was still geared to featuring its heroes in anthology titles like *Action Comics* and *Marvel Mystery Comics*. Among Captain America's many firsts is the half-forgotten fact that he wasn't just Timely's first hero to get his own magazine from the start, Cap was the first comic book superhero *ever* to leap full-blown into his own magazine.

Dated March 1941, that first issue of *Captain America* jumped out at the newsstand browser when it first appeared on December 20, 1940. The cover showed the now-familiar red, white and blue hero, clutching his soon-to-be-discarded triangular shield, as he delivered a roundhouse right to the jaw of no less than Adolph Hitler!

Where other heroes pummeled the tar out of fictitious supervillains,

BESIDES, I HAVE ANOTHER MISSION PLANNED...WITH AN EVEN GREATER PRIZE AT STAKE!
WITHIN 24 HOURS, MY AGENTS WILL STEAL THE ALLIES' MOST POWERFUL NEW WEAPON... AS THEY ATTACK...PROJECT VANISH!
PROJECT VANISH??

Art: Jack Kirby/Frank Kay/Colors: Richard Howell

Jack Kirby will "always remember" Captain America's greatest foe, the Red Skull.

Captain America was pitted against the true enemies of humanity, the ones that Simon and Kirby—soon to become inseparably teamed by fame like Rodgers and Hammerstein—tore from the headlines. American might not yet be at war, but Captain America would show it the way.

Inside that first issue, the cast was populated by other true-life personalities. A clearly recognizable President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was worried about Fifth Column activity in the U.S., as was J. Arthur Grover, Simon's version of J. Edgar Hoover. After rejecting the novel concept of drafting the Human Torch, Professor Reinstein—a thinly disguised Albert Einstein—offered his super-agent serum.

In a secret government laboratory masked by a curio shop, thin, sickly draft-reject Steve Rogers swallows the potion. In a matter of seconds, his muscles grow and ripple with chemical power. At the historic moment when the U.S. Army's first super-agent stands revealed, a Nazi spy guns down Professor Reinstein, and with him expires the secret of his formula.

Rogers moves fast, putting the spy out of action forever.

After the smoke clears, the government realizes that there will be only one super-soldier. And so Steve Rogers is given the chain-mail costume and shield of Captain America.

It's a classic origin story, but writer Joe Simon now dismisses it.

"I didn't think that the origin story was that unique," he says now. "I just wanted it over with, and to get him into his Captain America outfit."

It not only got Rogers into his Captain America duds, but also into khaki. No longer 4-F, he joins the Army, where he meets his topkick nemesis, gruff Sgt. Mike Duffy, and takes Camp Lehigh's young mascot, Bucky Barnes, under his wing. When Bucky stumbles upon Rogers during a costume change, the youngster is given a red and blue outfit of his own and becomes Captain America's sidekick.

Despite his distinctive baby face, no one ever connected the two. He was no waif, but a tough kid adept with both fists and not adverse to using a gun.

Bucky was named by Joe Simon. "In my high school basketball team," he recalls, "we had a guy named Buck Pierson. We called him Bucky. It sounded like a good enough name."

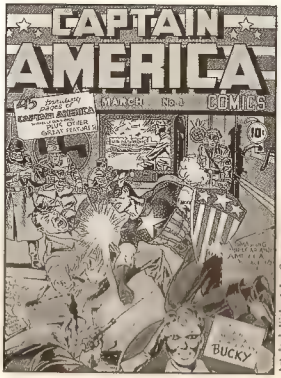
Simon didn't have to think twice about an artist to work on the feature. He and young Jack Kirby had collaborated on other Timely projects and had worked together for other companies before joining Timely. Although Simon was the writer and Kirby stuck with pencilling, Simon could also pencil and ink. The writing chores may have been a clear division of labor, but looking at the artwork, it was difficult to tell where Kirby left off and Simon began. Either man might ink or re-ink the other.

"The first time I saw his work, I admired it tremendously," Simon says of Kirby's work. "I thought Captain America was so superior to the other things. Our comics had more life than the others. The others looked like they were on paper. Ours looked like they were real people."

Not to be left out of the comic book mainstream, Captain America and Bucky also fought fantastic supervillains. Issue #1 introduced what was to become their most enduring one, the masked Nazi known as the Red Skull. He wore a leering, blood-red skull over his head and a maroon coverall emblazoned with a white swastika, clearly intended to evoke the simple red and white Nazi flag. Killed and unmasked as an evil aircraft manufacturer named George Maxon in the last story in *Captain America* #1, the Red Skull was revealed as a true Nazi, not an American turncoat, who was created by Hitler himself.

Although other villains, like the Black Talon, would revisit the series time and again, the Red Skull would become Captain America's perennial foe, thwarted but never vanquished, like a bad penny always turning up.

"The Red Skull is something I'll always remember," Kirby muses. "He was an anti-hero, and as important as the hero himself. Your evil guys are as important as the virtuous ones."



Developing Cap in 1941 "was a revolutionary concept," recalls Kirby. "We felt it was what the day demanded."

Most publishers wait for sales figures before making changes in their characters, but with *Captain America* #2, two alterations—one minor, one major—were suddenly made. Captain America's odd winged helmet was modified to a more traditional cloth cowl. More significantly, his clumsy triangular shield was rounded off and redesigned. It became a spinning superfrisbee, and suddenly it was good for more than just deflecting bullets.

Actually, an objection from John Goldwater, publisher of the rival *Shield*, prompted the design change.

"As a triangle, the uses would congeal," Kirby explains. "The round shield was like a discus. There are a number of things you could do with a discus that you *can't* do with a triangular-shaped object. You could roll it, you could throw it. We could use it in a variety of ways."

Captain America became an instant hit, quickly outselling Timely's flagship title, *Marvel Mystery Comics*. Simon and Kirby soon enlisted help with the title, bringing in writer Ed Herron, and inkers Syd Shores, Al Gabriele, Reed Crandall, Mort Meskin, George Klein, Al Liederman, Mike Sekowsky and others.

Up to that point, Jack Kirby had been just another up-and-coming comic book artist. But in *Captain America*, he grew into an innovator, pioneering exotic layouts, one and two-page wide-screen panels and many other cinematic techniques never before seen in comic books.

"You know, they threw me out of several art classes because I thought I was right," Kirby recalls with a laugh. "They felt I should have taken 30 days to draw this model. I was the kind of guy who never drew every muscle in a body. I didn't expect to draw like Rembrandt because Rembrandt wasn't selling!"

Under Kirby's exuberant pencils, Captain America and Bucky blazed through a bizarre assortment of villains in stories with titles like "The Weird Case of the Plundering Butterfly and the Ancient Mummies," "The Hunchback of Hollywood and the Movie Murder" and "The Phantom Hound of Cardiff Manor."

Not content to battle Nazis and Fifth Columnists, they branched out to Japanese spies, homegrown gangsters and other criminals. Their more exotic foes included the Black Toad, Fang, Arch-Fiend of the Orient and Dr. Grimm and his man-ape, Gorro. The heroes were rock 'em, sock 'em, cocky battlers. The atmosphere was creepy, often Gothic. It was diametrically opposed to the bright apple-pie premise of a hero draped in the flag, but readers loved it.

Captain America imitators sprang up like weeds. While the idea of a star-spangled superhero didn't originate with Captain America, Simon and Kirby made him work, and work magnificently. Soon, he was not the only man in red and white stripes—just the only one who mattered.

"He was our big creation," Kirby recalls. "He symbolized an entire period. In fact, he symbolized things that lasted for many, many years. He went through all the heartaches and all the joy that era symbolized. Captain America was very, very real."

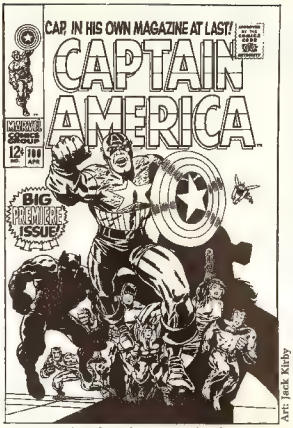
"Captain America has become like the flag," Simon echoes. "He symbolizes the whole thing."

Just before Pearl Harbor, after 10 issues, Simon and Kirby left the series, moving on to other projects, as they frequently would during their hectic but fertile partnership. Captain America rolled on, indelibly stamped by their unique styles, under writers like Stan Lee and artists like Al Avison and Syd Shores. He branched out into other titles like *All-Winners*, *All-Select*, *Young Allies* and *USA Comics*. A 1943 Republic movie serial was filmed with Dick Purcell in the role. The silver screen Captain America lacked his trademark shield, sidekick Bucky and even his true identity—he became fighting D.A. Grant Gardner—but he was still the one and only Captain America.

World War II finally concluded. One of the casualties was the Red Skull—who had at one point traded his Nazi chest emblem for a Rising Sun flag—who was killed in a final battle with the Allied hero. Captain America lived to fight other foes.

As American servicemen put aside their uniforms for civvies, so too did Steve Rogers. He left the Army, donned glasses and became a teacher at Lee High School in a story called "The Private Life of Captain America," in issue #59, dated November 1946. Bucky became one of his pupils. Editor Stan Lee, who first cut his writing teeth on a Captain America story, and would eventually become publisher of Marvel Comics, engineered that alteration. Over the years, Lee had become Captain America's chief writer.

Other changes were in the wind. In 1948, the cover to *Captain America* #66 showed a masked girl escaping, having shot Bucky. Captain America is torn—should he go after the assailant or save Bucky? A wounded Bucky groans in pain, valiantly exhorting his hero to forget him and get the girl, as a blurb touted, "The Startling Case of the Golden Girl."

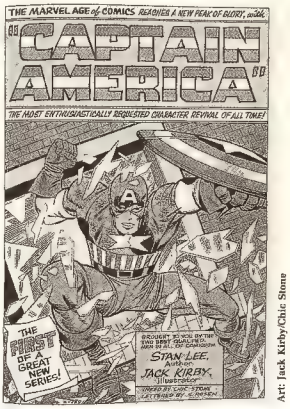


Cap resurfaced in the '60s to lead a new age of Marvel heroes.

The cover was slightly misleading. The girl on the cover was not the Golden Girl, Cap's sometime-girl friend, Betty Ross, who had discovered his true identity. Like Bucky before her, she was pressed into service as Captain America's new sidekick, the masked Golden Girl.

Bucky, who really was shot during that same adventure by the cover-featured female villain, Lavender, went off to recuperate, vowing to return to action soon. He only made one cameo appearance after that.

In 1949, horror comics were the newest trend. Superheroes were on


THE MARVEL AGE of COMICS REACHES A NEW PEAK OF GLORY, with
CAPTAIN AMERICA
"THE MOST ENTHUSIASTICALLY BROUGHT BACK CHARACTER REVIVAL OF ALL TIME!"
THE FIRST OF GREAT NEW SERIES!
STAN LEE, Author
JACK KIRBY, Illustrator
Art: Jack Kirby/Chic Stone

Immediately after reappearing, Cap smashed his way into his own feature in *Tales of Suspense*.

the wane. *Captain America* was retitled *Captain America's Weird Tales* with issue #74. It cover-featured a ghoulish Red Skull menacing Captain America (the rematch took place in Hell), but inside, Cap had been demoted to lead feature. He was totally absent in the next issue—the final one.

Captain America had passed from the comic book scene. But not for very long. Late in 1953, Stan Lee and artist John Romita revived him, along with the dormant Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, in the pages of *Young Men* #24. This led to a revival of *Captain America Comics* with issue #76. This time, Captain America—still holding forth at Lee High School—battled Communists from Kansas to Korea. It was a new global menace and a new challenge for America's most American superhero. He was billed as "Captain America...Commie Smasher."

Once more, the deathless Red Skull returned. This time, he joined forces with—who else?—the Reds. His escape from Hell was never explained.

But the early 1950s was a difficult time for the comic book. The Red Menace hysteria sweeping the country also blew through the industry, leading to a backlash against comics that were deemed objectionable by concerned parents' groups. Although *Captain America* was not among those targeted, it too fell with the four-color chaff. *Captain America* #78, dated September 1954, closed out his rival—after a scant three issues.

It would take a major revival of the comic book industry to bring him back. By the early '60s, Stan Lee, editor and chief writer of the revitalized Marvel Comics, had teamed with Jack Kirby—he and Simon had gone their separate ways—to create a new cycle of superheroes, beginning with *The Fantastic Four* in 1961.

One of the Fantastic Four was a new incarnation of Timely's old Human Torch character. Spun off into his own solo adventures in *Strange Tales*, he encountered in late 1963 no less than Captain America. But this Captain America, while outwardly resembling the old, was a thief and a criminal. Puzzled, the Human Torch blazed after him through 18 pages of wild Jack Kirby action—although in the radically different style that the now-seasoned artist had developed in the 21 years since he had last drawn the character.

In the end, this Captain America was unmasked as an old Torch foe, the Acrobat. But a Stan Lee caption at the story's end put the question to the readership. Would they like to see the *real* Captain America return?

The answer was a foregone con-

clusion. Only three months later, in the fourth issue of a new Lee and Kirby title, *The Avengers*, several Marvel superheroes, who were only infants when Steve Rogers first drank that precious super-serum, discovered a floating chunk of ice that had been torn from a glacier by the revived Sub-Mariner.

Pulling the ice block into their submarine, the Avengers—Thor, Giant-Man, the Wasp and Iron Man—

"Captain America has become like the flag," says Joe Simon. "He symbolizes the whole thing."

Art: Jack Kirby

discovered under the melting ice the figure of a blonde man in tattered Army khaki. And under those rags, a hauntingly-familiar blue costume and unique red and white shield.

And then, the unconscious man started to breathe!

The year was 1964. And the legend of Captain America was about to come full circle....

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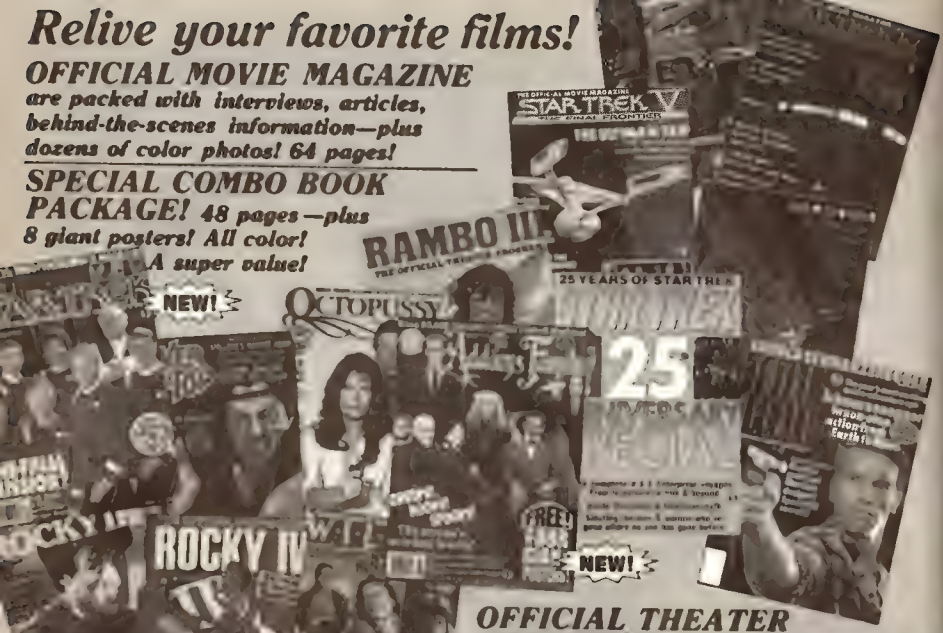

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MOB SCENE

Teeming with heroes, Marv Wolfman introduces a legion of new (& old) Titans.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

The next generation of superheroes is about to invade the DC Universe in *Team Titans*. These *newest* Titans are the first of many new supergroups to leap from the mind of Marv Wolfman in this ongoing companion title to *The New Titans*, as the two teams cross over, exchange members and try to make peace before killing one another.

But, unlike the original Titans, these teenagers from the future are warriors as much as superheroes.

"When we began the series, they were obviously more superheroic," says Wolfman. "They remain superheroes, but they're from a world totally taken over by Lord Chaos."

Wolfman explains that numerous Titans groups are arriving from the future, all emerging at slightly different moments, but the team's core will be Mirage, the shape-shifter; the electrical Killowat; Dagon, the vampire known as Nightrider; Redwing, who has predator-like speed, vision and agility; Prester John, brother of Redwing, who inhabits an organic computer; and the all-new Terra. When Terra exits to join the New Titans, she is replaced by the bloodthirsty Battalion. Donna Troy leaves the New Titans, and will be a regular member of the *Team Titans* cast.

The writer calls Battalion "the drill sergeant from hell" and says, "He's the one who put them all together in the future. He and Donna Troy are at war over control of the group."

All Titans Art Colors: Tom McCraw

Marv Wolfman enlists Battalion, "the drill sergeant from Hell," to whip his *Team Titans* into shape.

"*Team Titans* isn't military in a G.I. Joe sense," says Wolfman. "It's more of an *action* superhero book."

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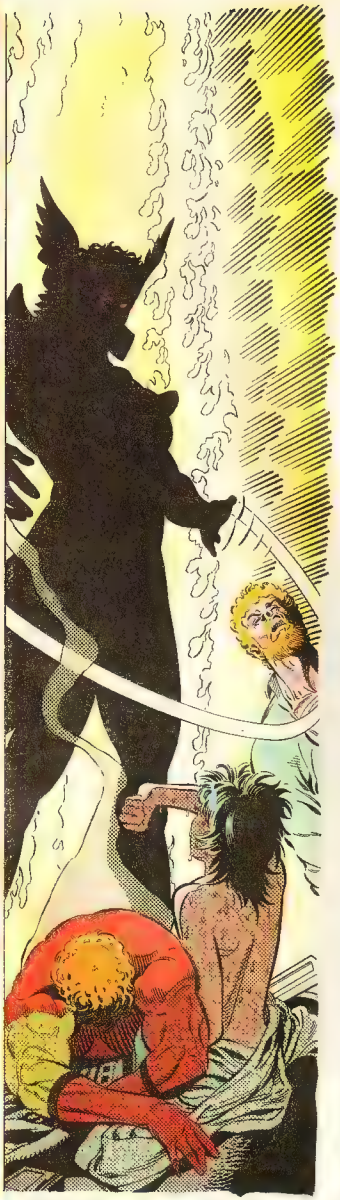


Things won't necessarily cool down for Wolfman's Titans after "Total Chaos."

Nightrider: Taking a bite out of crime.

The first three issues of *Team Titans* cross over with *New Titans* and *Deathstroke, the Terminator* (which Wolfman discussed in CS #24) in a nine-part story arc called "Total Chaos." That resolves the Donna Troy-Lord Chaos tale, directly affecting some of the new team.

"Several of the Team Titans have been raised in incubators, essentially to be warriors who will fight for Chaos. Along the way, they realized that Lord Chaos was actually destroying the world," Wolfman says. "The characters who weren't raised by Chaos and his war machine were raised to *destroy* Chaos and his war machine! So, they're not crimefighters like the original Titans. They're superheroic characters used to fighting in a military machine against goals.

"The Team Titans aren't just out to stop the latest supervillain, but to stop super-terrorist activity. *Team Titans* isn't military in a G.I. Joe sense; it's more of an *action* superhero book. These characters are not limited to stopping the guy who robs the corner drug store. They have goals and missions from their world in the future."

Introduced last year in *New Titans Annual* #7 as a team from an alternate future ruled by Lord Chaos, the Team Titans are sent back to our time to kill Donna Troy before she can give birth to Lord Chaos. They end up working with the New Titans when Chaos travels back to our present.

"We discover in *Team Titans* #2 that the machine which brought them back to our time is serving as a doorway for Lord Chaos' warriors. He's sending many people into the past as well," says Wolfman, who adds that the *Team Titans* won't be like *Deathstroke, the Terminator* or *The Punisher*. Once the initial nine-part Titans Universe cross-over is finished, Wolfman's three books will all have a very different feel.

"*Deathstroke* will be a realistic type of action book, without the superhero cross-overs. *New Titans* will be very much the book it has been—with superheroes concerned about be-

Mirage: Nightwing's in her sights.

ing kept out of New York. They have to go underground and are on the run," he says.

Wolfman points out that the many teams introduced in the new title won't be much alike, even if their goals are similar.

"Each *Team Titans* group is slightly different. They're much harder-edged, and won't be wearing the same costumes that we've seen them in. One of their goals is to stop Lord Chaos' troops in the present, but it's not a one-note book—they'll be going after other situations, too."

Since the futuristic groups were all formed in honor of the original Titans, Wolfman says one of them will look exactly like the *original* Teen Titans from the 1960s, with Speedy, Kid Flash, Wonder Girl, Aqualad and Robin.

"What that group looks like, and what that group *is*, are two different things. The only difference is, *this* Robin is the Robin of today. Except for Robin, they aren't the sweet little kids they appear to be—they just happen to *look* like the original Titans," Wolfman says.

The initial three issues of *Team Titans* resolve the "Total Chaos" storyline, as Donna Troy's baby is born; Donna becomes ultra-powerful and faces off against Lord Chaos, with the Titans caught in the middle. Issue #4 sees the team try to improve their public image as a result of the *Titans Sell Out!* one-shot with the New Titans. In issue #5, they attempt to acquire a private life by enrolling in school—*without* secret identities. The other Titans teams, as well as Battalion, will begin showing up in these issues. In addition, Killowat's best friend becomes the commander of the forces of Lord Chaos, and they must battle the Team Titans to ensure Lord Chaos exists in their world.

"It may sound complicated," says Wolfman, "but I'm keeping track so that new readers can come in on a regular basis."

When the current Team Titans were created for the 1991 *New Titans Annual*, Wolfman says he had no idea that the group would get their own title. Editor Jonathan Peterson suggested that the annual feature Nightwing leading a Titans group in the future.

"I didn't just want to have him lead a group fighting Monarch, and I realized it would be more exciting to develop a parallel story," says Wolfman. "Rarely can you come up with many characters all at once that work, but in this case, all the characters and their origins jelled quickly. It was very much like when I did the original *Teen Titans* group. They came one right after another. The Team Titans were all designed by [artist] Tom Grummett, and we realized we had more than an annual story. There was immediate interest at DC, because the characters worked. So, we figured out a way to bring these characters back into our present."

After a pilot issue in *New Titans* #81, in which the regular New Titans don't appear, the response was so strong that DC decided to publish *Team Titans* monthly.

One of the more controversial elements of the newest team was the inclusion of Terra, patterned after the character who died several years ago in *Titans*.

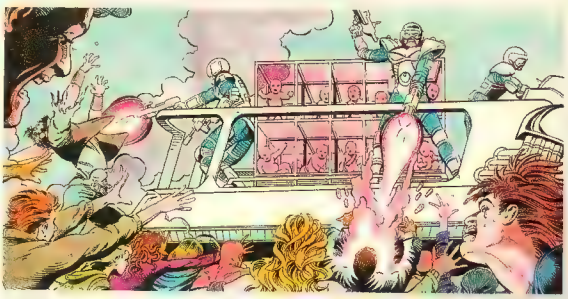
"I always swore that the original Terra would *never* come back," Wolfman says. "The power is a good power, but I thought it would be interesting to make Terra work in a logical fashion, yet not be Terra."

Since most of the records involving the original Titans have been destroyed in their alternate future, and since the current Titans never told anyone that the original Terra was a traitor, Lord Chaos created a new Terra to infiltrate the Titans. "The idea was to come up with something that worked logically within all current Titans mythology, yet brought back, in a sense, a strong character that the readers liked. This Terra isn't a psychopath, and her powers aren't as great.

"I also liked how she could upset the apple cart in the present: What it does to her relationship with Changeling, what it does to Deathstroke—who had a 16-year-old kid for a lover for a brief time, back when he was a little more vicious; what it does to everything! Terra is a wild card, because even she doesn't know some of her own programming, or who she was in her time period. I was pleased with the character's addition from the shock value to the readers to making it work correctly without bringing back the original Terra or making her [the Outsiders'] Geo-Force's daughter. This uses everything."

The first issue was published in five different versions, but unlike variant cover gimmicks, all five are double-sized while selling for the regular price. Although all contain a common story—part three of the "Total Chaos" crossover—each also includes a *different* full-length origin story for a group member.

"It's a lack-of-sales gimmick," Wolfman quips, "because the amount of work to do that first issue is more than any returns could ever be! It's much easier to slap a new cover on a book, as was done for *X-Men* or even *Robin*—to me, *that's* a sales gimmick. If people want to spend $1.50 for a new cover, that's their problem, but I think it's stupid. Jonathan Peterson



All Titans Art: Kevin Maguire/Will Blyberg

Several of Wolfman's Team Titans were "raised in incubators, essentially to be warriors who will fight for Chaos."

came up with the idea that, since everybody is doing this and really taking advantage of the fans, why don't we show them that DC is willing to eat some money, because this stunt *does* cost more than it could make. Readers are getting *two* full stories for the price of one. There's a different cover on each issue, because there's a different *story* in each issue."

The Terra origin story is by newcomer Phil Jimenez and inked by George Perez. "It's unbelievable—people are going to think George re-did everything, because of the detail work, but it's Phil's—George was very honest to the pencils," Wolfman says.

Mirage's origin is pencilled by Gabriel Morrissette; the full-length Redwing story is by Adam Hughes and Karl Kesel; Nightrider's origin is by Mike Nassar and Perez, and the Killowat story is by Kerry Gammill and Al Vey. "There's really great art on all of these stories, and on top of that, the cover and the regular ongoing story is by Kevin Maguire," he says.

Terra: New Titan or traitor?

Wolfman promises some special features in each different book: "As I developed the origin series, all of them became major, major characters in my mind. I think Dagon—Nightrider, the vampire—is a very strong character. Jonathan has worked on the origins very carefully. He's a very strong, very hands-on editor. Filtering [the material] through the two of us and through the artists made for some very strong origin stories," he says.

Each of the Team Titans is getting their own full-length origin story, except for Prester John, Redwing's late brother who has become part of an organic computer. Half of Prester John's origin, including how he got his powers, is in the Redwing solo story, while the other half is revealed in the Killowat tale.

"All we ever see of him is that little computer tube, because he no longer has a body. Because he's Redwing's brother, it didn't make sense to replicate Redwing's origin for him, so I only showed what I needed to show to reveal how he got where he is today. So, in those five first issues," Wolfman promises, "you get *six* different origins!"

"Total Chaos" breaks loose as he confronts the Team Titans.

Killowat: Hopes to change current events.

Team Titans will be introducing several different Titans teams from the future to keep the books interesting, moving, and different, says Wolfman. Readers, however, won't be deluged with too many new groups at once.

"I don't want to create endless characters that don't work, just to fill up the book," he says. "Although they came fast, I spent a lot of time thinking of the origins, emotions and powers. The origin stories are very complex for all of them—I think they're far better thought out than the

original Titans origins, and those have sprung stories for the past 12 years!"

To make a group book work, not only must each character be carefully thought out, so must their function within the group.

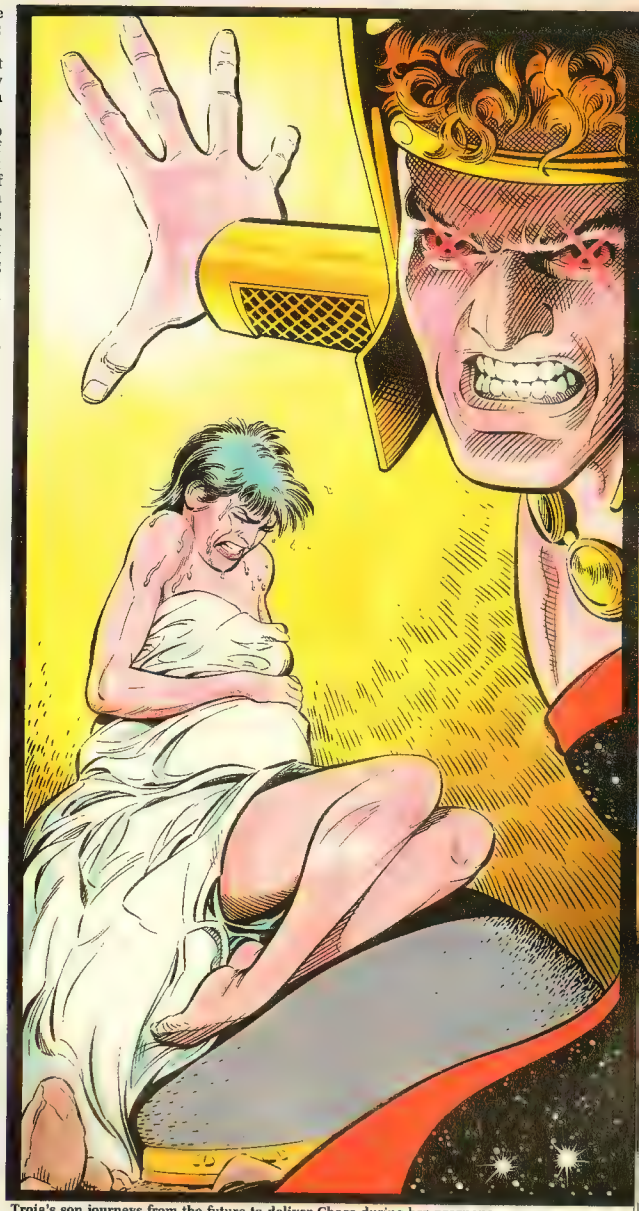
"If the characters don't function so that they bring out all the elements of all the other members, the group isn't functioning correctly. That's part of fiction, and part of making a situation like this work. They can't all be whiny, complaining characters, or whatever. You have to figure out what emotional stuff each one can bring out, so that they work in balance and you don't have 12 of the same character. You also have to make sure that they can continue to spring off stories based on who they are and their backgrounds," he says. "As I can come up with new characters and reasons for these new groups, then I'll come up with more new groups. That's the only way to do it!

"I like to think that *each* of those new groups will be good enough for their own series. That's the thinking process that must take place before I'm going to release characters—there are too many characters today to turn out more bad ones."

Wolfman says he plans to stay with *Team Titans, New Titans* and *Deathstroke, the Terminator*, but won't take on any other ongoing series. "I'm devoting myself to these three big projects, and that's it! All of them are in a major state of flux. I'm very excited about the *Team Titans*, because it allows me to write a grittier superhero book—I don't mean gritty in the way that many of the British writers write gritty—I'm talking about a darker, heavier-action book.

"This feels like a second coming, in a sense," says Marv Wolfman. "After a couple of fallow years, things are interesting again, and I'm really enjoying it!"

Redwing: More than just a pretty bird.



Troia's son journeys from the future to deliver Chaos during her pregnancy.

WORLDS SO COOL

An outsider in an outside medium, Ralph Bakshi again doodles with live-action & animation.

By MARC SHAPIRO

Photo: Bruce Birmelin

Ralph Bakshi's "conflict between live action and animation" may have ended after creating this *Cool World*.

Filmmaker/animator Ralph Bakshi, fresh off a nearly 10-year hiatus from big-screen moviemaking, has thrown in the towel, given up the ghost. No, it's not as terminal as it sounds.

"From now on, I will do *only* pure animation," declares Bakshi, whose first big-screen outing after an extended vacation is the animated/live-action fantasy *Cool World*. "I've given up the conflict between live action and animation. It was something I resolved in my own mind while I was making this film. And the conclusion I came to was that live action is a *secondary* medium and that animation is spectacular."

Bakshi makes this announcement/pronouncement during a break in editing *Cool World* (now in theaters). Bakshi, helming his first animated feature since the rigors of *Fire and Ice* sent him into a self-imposed exile in 1983, is in good spirits as he wraps his film. He's at ease enough not to worry about how his first film in years will fare at the box office.

"Right now, I'm negotiating a bunch of post-*Cool World* projects," he chuckles. "But if *Cool World* bombs, people will say 'Bakshi, you jerk!' and the negotiations will stop."

Bakshi claims sole credit for the *Cool World* storyline: "I created the idea and thought I would like to see it made. Although the storyline changed and evolved once I got together with [producer] Frank Mancuso Jr., I came

All Cool World Photos & Art: Copyright 1991, 1992 Paramount Pictures

Holli's Goons can't help but notice a difference between the Doodle and the real thing (Basinger).

into this project with the concept already in mind."

It is a concept, proclaims Bakshi, that has its roots firmly planted in modern-day society and its prevailing social and sexual climate.

"To a certain extent, *Cool World* is about a loss of innocence," he explains of this tale of a cartoonist (Gabriel Byrne), who winds up in an animated fantasy world filled with tough-talking Doodles and sexy cartoon starlets. "But it's also about tension. I have a kid in college, and we talk about what it's like out there. The real risks you take in getting close and the consequences of it. AIDS has definitely caused a change in lifestyle, and there's a tremendous tension afoot in the land. It was nothing premeditated on my part, but much of that tension does seem to run through the *Cool World* story."

Bakshi reports that the *Cool World* script went through "three or four drafts and a final studio draft I was handed on my way out to the first day of shooting."

For legal reasons, he is reluctant to discuss the script's evolution, but assures that "what people will see in the animation portion of the film is 100 percent *my* idea."

Creating the main Doodle characters that populate *Cool World* was a give-and-take process that involved Bakshi and creative minds Mark O'Hare, Louise Zingerelli and Tom McGrath.

"We broke the personalities of the Doodles down into the main characters. I did the original designs and then passed them on to other people who redefined and continued to develop what I did. Having animation experience was a big advantage on this film, and it helped this element come together very quickly."

He gets specific, detailing the process of fine-tuning the main members of his fantasy world: "Holli Would [the animated character who becomes human] had to look like Kim [Basinger], but rather than a cartoon duplicate, she had to look like a younger version of her. The attitude I took with Holli was that you were better off, physically, being a cartoon. In the story, Holli goes from cartoon to flesh and blood, and I wanted her to age slightly when she became real. I thought that would be more interesting than just doing a duplicate Holli. With that character, I definitely wanted a difference.

"With Lonette, I was interested in a 1940s' waitress kind of girl and ultimately looked to Lena Horne as a model. The Goons were just a bunch of outrageous ideas I had kicking around. Nails was modeled after somebody I knew in high school."

The animator claims that for the wide variety of weirdos that populate the *Cool World* landscape, Bakshi went to an unlikely source.

"I was looking for a Terrytoons style of animation for those characters. Terrytoons [where Bakshi worked in the mid-60s] is a much-maligned studio because they did a lot of poor Disney-type work and other not-so-great stuff. But, when you sit down and analyze their character design, you see a tremendous naivete and originality. It's a unique style that everybody has kept away from. But I liked the floaty, inconsistent elements and incorporated them into the film."

Filming a combination of live action and animation on location in Las Vegas and on Hollywood soundstages proved a rigorous, but not insurmountable, return to the film business for Bakshi.

"There was some concern about my having to deal with real actors," says Bakshi, "but what many people have forgotten is that many things I've done, even as far back as *Coonskin*, had live-action elements to them. The live-action elements in *Cool World* don't ask too much of me, anyway. There was nothing truly spectacular, just a lot of conversations and a cou-

Photo: Merrick Morton

Separating the Doodles from the boys are detective Frank Harris (Brad Pitt) and his handy partner, Nails.

Photo: Merrick Morton

***Cool World* "is about a loss of innocence," says Bakshi, and if anyone would agree, Holli Would (Kim Basinger).**

ple of chase sequences. Outside of one scene in which Holli has to climb up the side of a building, there was nothing in this film that would stretch a live-action director."

But he offers that his animation background proved integral to smoothing over bumps during *Cool World*'s making.

"I felt like I had a tremendous advantage in filming the live action in that I was also the animation director," he says. "For the scenes in which the live-action and animated characters appeared together, I showed the actors all the storyboards so they could become familiar with how they should act and move in relation to the animated characters that would be added later. When it came time to rehearse the scenes, I used live-action stand-ins so that the actors would have something to play off of. When the scenes were actually shot, I alternated shots with and without stand-ins.

"As animation director, I was able to watch the live-action performance and, if an actor misstepped or went too far, I was quickly able to redirect the animation in my mind. I could have an animated character leap out of the way, up onto a shelf or duck under an arm, and we could go on with the scene. With this film, I was definitely able to go with the flow."

With a background so steeped in animated adventures, one might be tempted to equate Bakshi's *Cool World* with a subconscious desire to see his characters become real.

"In a sense, I would guess that's the case," he agrees. "This is a metaphor I've worked with before. It's something that has been with me since the days of *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*. When it comes to both media, animation is so much more manipulative and creative. There's so much more you can do with it. You can do beautiful things with live action, but what I've discovered over the years is that the things you can do with animation can be *unbelievable*."

Bakshi's enthusiasm for the potential of big-screen animation wasn't always so high. Point of fact, by the time Bakshi and pal Frank Frazetta got around to collaborating on *Fire and Ice* (which Bakshi discussed in the original CS #9), the filmmaker's attitude was at an all-time low.

"The only reason I did *Fire and Ice* was because I wanted the chance to work with Frank," he laments. "But I wasn't happy with the results. The film was supposed to be slick, but to make *Fire and Ice* the way I wanted to make it would have required much more than the $3- to 4-million budget I had. A lack of dollars kept me away

Photo: Bruce Birmelin

For projects like *Cool World*, "what's important is how you work the film and how you and the animators make it evolve," says Bakshi.

Photo Merrick Morton

Interested in "a 1940s waitress kind of girl" for Harris' girl friend, Lonette, Bakshi "looked to Lena Horne as a model."

from the polish and the way I wanted to see the final animation. It was a slick film that needed slicker money.

"But the problems with *Fire and Ice* were nothing new to me," he continues. "It's a problem I had with all my early films. In a way, the small budgets worked to my advantage, because the subject matter was so personal and—in a sense—crude that the low budgets actually *helped* them."

Bakshi claims he was totally burned out by the time *Fire and Ice* was released and says he was mentally ready to pull the plug on animated movies.

"The frustration made me really tired. None of my films were ever backed up by pencil tests or the time and money to redo things. Since I was having to do most of the work in my head, things became very intense. Plus, I had finally reached the point where I was determined *not* to do another animated film until I could get the kind of budget a Steven Spielberg or a Don Bluth gets. But the bottom line was that I wasn't so much driven out as I simply got tired and left."

Bakshi got out of the studio, returned home and "became an artist again." During this period of self-examination, he discovered that he had "run out of life experiences on which to base my films."

He adds, "I painted for a while and became one with the canvas rather than one-on-one with a million people like when I was making movies. I

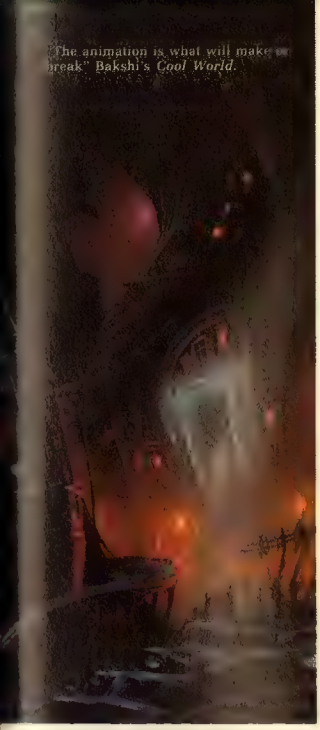
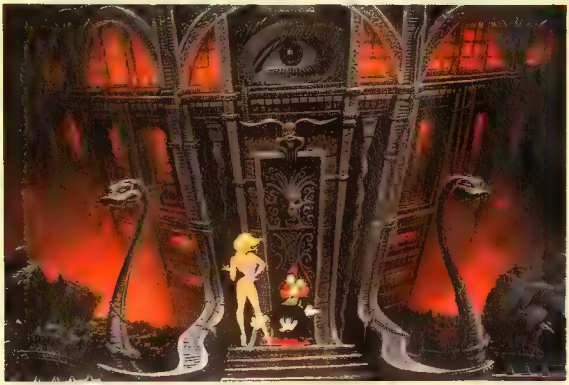


Photo: Merrick Morton

Jack Deebs (Gabriel Byrne, center) may not agree, but Bakshi doesn't think "there's an inordinate amount of sex" in *Cool World*.



As a result of *Cool World*, Bakshi thinks "live action is a *secondary* medium and animation is spectacular."

loved animation, but discovered that there was something else to life. I learned a lot in those years away from the studio."

Bakshi emerged from his extended vacation with a tentative animated step as producer on the revived *Mighty Mouse*. He recalls that stint was "a turning point in my life.

"I realized I could compete with the younger guys and work with a bunch of people who didn't think I was an old fart. But the bottom line was that working on *Mighty Mouse* gave me the courage to go on."

One of the bonuses of the *Mighty Mouse* experience was that Bakshi nurtured the talents of John Kricafulsi, who has since gone on to make *Ren and Stimpy* a joy to behold.

"*Ren and Stimpy* is brilliant," Bakshi acknowledges. "John's one of the most brilliant animators in the business, and I think he's going to show us all how to do it right."

Bakshi brings the conversation back to *Cool World*, responding to the question of whether *Cool World* spins

(continued on page 72)

Bakshi's "Terrytoons style of animation" for his Doodles "is a unique style that everyone has kept away from."

The Stroman FACTOR

THIS IS SOME ORGANIZATION THE GOVERNMENT HAS GOING FOR IT! THEY CAN'T EVEN CONFIRM THE IDENTITY OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE! THEY'RE ALLOWING BLATANT FRAUDS INTO THEIR RANKS WITHOUT AUTHENTICATION!
ALL RIGHT! NOBODY MOVE!
I WAS GONNA SCRATCH MY NOSE THAT OKAY?

All X-Factor Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991, 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

All X-Factor Art: Larry Stroman/Al Milgrom/Colors: Glynis Oliver

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Artist Larry Stroman is the magic ingredient in these heroic adventures.

The more mutants, the merrier, says Larry Stroman. *X-Factor*'s penciller is having a ball drawing the assortment of team members, including any superheroes who happen to cross over.

Still, the unassuming artist isn't trying to outdo the other X-books.

"I don't think of it in those terms," he says. "I think of what I'm doing on my particular book. I don't compare it to other people's stuff and I never have. I flip through the stuff, sometimes I even read them. I just never compare me to other people—I do my own stuff on my own terms."

The collaboration between Stroman and writer Peter David on *X-Factor* is more or less routine, according to the penciller.

"I get the plot and do the drawing, and then he writes it! It's not much more than that. I like what he does as a writer, and he lets me do what I'm gonna do as an artist," Stroman says. "Sometimes, things will be changed slightly, but for the most part, we both just do our little things."

Stroman admires the plots he receives from David, but still finds enough flexibility in them to suit him.

"I never really stick tightly to anybody's plots!" Stroman laughs. "Most of what I've done has been based on what I've been given by the writer. So far, that has been stuff based on character development. I usually try to do things based on what it is that I think would be best representative of that particular character.

***X-Factor* artist Larry Stroman finds Guido "fun to draw," but prefers "drawing the people in the background."**

"There's not much in terms of things blowing up and people with big guns. I haven't gotten into that stuff yet."

Stroman doesn't have a favorite team member, but enjoys drawing some more than others.

"Guido is fun to draw, but I get the most enjoyment out of drawing the people in the background," he admits. "Guido is fairly easy to draw, because he's just this big shape.

"When you're drawing people who are supposed to be realistic, then you must deal with things in their terms, which is much harder. You have to do much more referencing for the characters. But, when you're dealing with someone who's just this big shape that doesn't match anything, it's almost like you're creating a person that doesn't really exist, and you can pretty much do anything you want with him."

As a comic-book professional, Stroman feels an artist must entertain and tell a story at the same time.

"It's all the same thing. It's telling a story in an entertaining way," he says. "It has to be entertaining, or else you're *not* doing your job. When people pay the money, they want to enjoy the book. It's not just about information, because then we would be doing comics that are based on information. This is entertainment."

Many artists cite comics greats of the past as inspirations, teachers or mentors. Stroman doesn't have any perpetual influences.

"It changes constantly from one week to the next," he explains. "It's always different people. Right now, my biggest influences are friends of mine who just recently got into the comic business."

The artist grew up loving comics, but isn't sure how his career in the field came about.

"It's just an extension of liking to draw, period," he says. "Now I'm able to take my drawing to this different level by taking these characters, moving them around, and creating new environments around them. That itself is a development in terms of being an artist."

Stroman's career is a wish come true, but his first professional work wasn't for the comics industry.

"I did other things. I did drafting, portraits, some advertising stuff, but none of it was satisfying. Comics were the thing that I wanted to do from the beginning, but they ended up being the last thing that I actually approached," he says.

His expectations and reality in comics proved to be two different things. "In terms of doing the books themselves, it's exciting the way I always thought it would be. To me, the only problem comes with having to deal with people who I don't necessarily know from growing up and reading the stuff, dealing with people from the business point-of-view."

Besides his work on *X-Factor*, Stroman is pencilling several issues of DC's new *Darkstars*, an SF-oriented superhero title about an intergalactic peace-keeping agency.

Stroman says the book, which focuses on an extraterrestrial lawman, is reminiscent of the *Green Lantern* titles. It's written by Michael Jan Friedman, who scripts DC's *Star Trek* title. Since Stroman became involved at the series' beginning, he had to help create its look.

"I did all of the designs—everything was from scratch," he says, noting that it was a learning experience. "I've never done a book from scratch like that before. Most of my books have been based on something else. But on this, they gave me basic information about who these people were, and I was to come up with their look.

Expect a Stroman-drawn Polaris pin-up to attract *Marvel Swimsuit* readers.

Stroman isn't into blowing things up, but that hasn't stopped Havok.

"And, I found out that it was much harder than I thought it would be," says Stroman. "It gets easier, because I became familiar with the look I wanted to give to the book."

Now that he has achieved his longtime goal of becoming a comics pro, Stroman says he doesn't read any current titles regularly.

"I read an average of five or so comics every month, but every month it's different books!" he says. "Usually, if I follow a book, it's because I like a particular artist who's doing that book. I always follow artists. As soon as an artist leaves a particular book, no matter how involved I am in the book, I switch."

Stroman is also keeping busy with two other projects for Marvel. One is a Punisher story that will likely be slotted into one of the monthly titles soon, and the other is a Punisher-Black Widow Prestige format book. "It involves the Black Widow dealing with the fact that she's starting to slip up a little, and the Punisher and Nick Fury start to get on her about it."

In addition, his fans will be treated to a pin-up of Lorna Dane as Polaris, as the *X-Factor* star is featured in the next *Marvel Swimsuit* magazine.

Working on one of Marvel's best-sellers has plenty of rewards—financial and otherwise—but Stroman says the biggest challenge is maintaining *X-Factor*'s popularity.

"I love drawing all of these various characters. And, I love being able to take a popular book, and keep it popular!" he says.

Other artists might be intimidated, but Larry Stroman says he loves the challenge of drawing the huge number of characters whenever there are X-crossovers. "That makes it a lot more interesting!"

BATGIRL CASEBOOK

Yvonne Craig drop-kicked evildoers alongside a Caped Crusader.

By KYLE COUNTS

Art: Carmine Infantino

If anyone had told Yvonne Craig at 14 that she would one day forsake her association with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in favor of an acting career that would find her playing a caped crimefighter who drove a purple Yamaha trimmed in lace, she would no doubt have questioned that person's sanity. But hang up her dancing shoes the brunette ballerina did, paving the way for her role as Batgirl, the sexy superheroine who clobbered the likes of Milton Berle, Cliff Robertson and Rudy Vallee on ABC's *Batman*.

The once-trim cover girl figure has filled out with the passing of time, but at 52, Craig still radiates the kind of beauty the years do not dull. It can still be seen in her sparkling green eyes and heard in her hearty laugh. She clearly enjoys reliving the memories associated with being part of one of television's most enduring phenomena, one that shows no sign of slowing down with the nationwide syndication of the 1966-68 series and

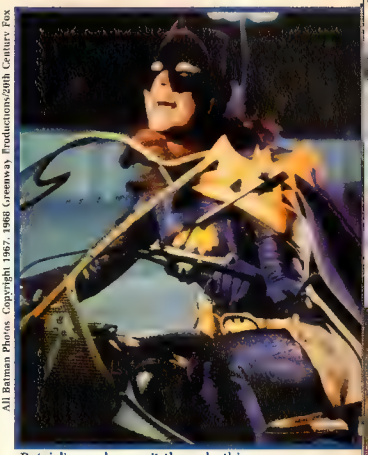
All Batman Characters, Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

the release of the Tim Burton-directed feature based on Bob Kane's Dark Knight. Having just seen the film, she is anxious to share her thoughts about the *Batman* movie.

'I went prepared to enjoy it, and I did," says Craig, relaxing in her spacious Santa Monica, California apartment overlooking the ocean. 'Jack Nicholson was fine as the Joker, but I thought his was a very one-dimensional, comic-strip kind of portrayal. I'll tell you, though: I will go to see *Batman* Parts Two through 10, as long as Michael Keaton plays Batman. He made Batman a complicated, interesting, charming character—and I thought he was *wonderful*. Adam [West] is going to be very upset.'

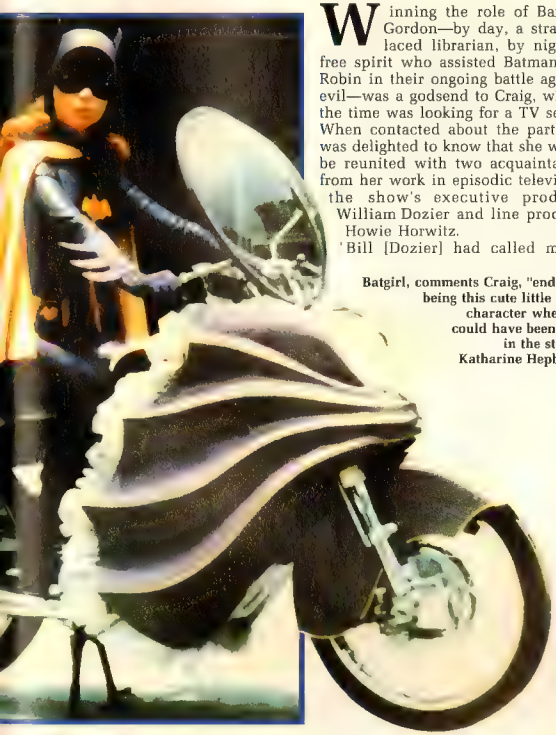
As for the film's tone, Craig says, "The series was the aberration; the new movie is closer to what the original Batman was like than we ever were. We were bright and light and very much of the '60s. The movie is very much of its time in that it's very dark." In fact, it may have been a little *too* dark for Craig, but not in terms of its mood. "In the final fight between the Joker and Batman in the belfry, I couldn't see who was doing what to whom. That part of it was dark, but not dark in a somber way, just not well lit," she laughs.

Would she have wanted to be part of the new *Batman*? "Sure. But if I had been the producer, *I* wouldn't have wanted any of the old cast within 50 yards of the movie. Otherwise, you would immediately think it was going to be a laughy, campy, jokey movie—and it isn't; that's not what they were trying to do. If, however, they *were* going to make it a laughy, campy, jokey movie, they might have used us in cameo roles—like me as a meter maid. [In an announcer's voice:] What happens to old crimefighters? They're writing parking tickets!' Or if they wanted to touch on the women's lib angle, I could have been a lady police commissioner, since I used to be the commissioner's daughter. It would have been fun."



All Batman Photos Copyright 1967, 1968 Greenway Productions/20th Century Fox

Batgirl's mask wasn't the only thing changed between her "pilot" and the series. Her modified motorcycle was altered as well.



Batgirl, comments Craig, "ended up being this cute little bland character when she could have been more in the style of Katharine Hepburn."

Winning the role of Barbara Gordon—by day, a straight-laced librarian, by night, a free spirit who assisted Batman and Robin in their ongoing battle against evil—was a godsend to Craig, who at the time was looking for a TV series. When contacted about the part, she was delighted to know that she would be reunited with two acquaintances from her work in episodic television, the show's executive producer William Dozier and line producer Howie Horwitz.

'Bill [Dozier] had called me in years before and asked me to do a pilot for *My Sister Eileen*. Howie had done 114 hours of prime time TV—he was the Aaron Spelling of his time. So, they both knew me. It wasn't like my agent said, 'How about Yvonne Craig for the part?' and they said, 'Who?' In the interim, I heard that Mary Ann Mobley was supposed to have been up for it and they chose me instead, but I don't know if that was a publicity thing or not."

Since her interest in literature as a child didn't include comics, Craig was unaware of both Batman the comic-book character and the TV series. When her sister told her about the show, she sniffed, "I think television should be more uplifting." When she first spoke with Dozier, Craig was forced to admit that she had never watched *Batman*. She agreed to spend the summer looking at reruns so she would know how Batgirl would fit into the program.

"I was cast because they knew I moved well, and I looked the part physically," says Craig. "Both of them knew my work, so they knew I was a competent actress. The bonus was that I could ride a motorcycle."

As Horwitz explained in an interview with *TV Guide* at the time, Batgirl was being introduced to "freshen up the show. Girls over eight need...a big girl to identify with."

For more on Batgirl, Yvonne Craig's career and her Star Trek *guest stint, see the companion interview with Craig in STARLOG #149.*

"There was something happening between Batgirl and Batman [Adam West] in the presentation film that got lost in the shuffle," bemoans Craig.

Others speculated that the show was in trouble—it ran twice weekly in its first two seasons and was cut back to a single night in season number three—and that Craig was being brought aboard to add a touch of sexiness to the proceedings.

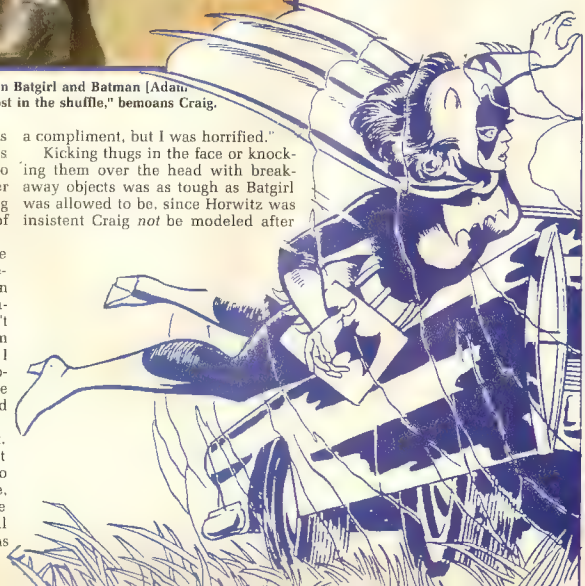
"Mr. Dozier and Howie told me that the character was aimed at a pre-pubescent female audience and an over-40 male audience. Now, I understood the over-40 part, but I wasn't certain that they had their finger on the pulse of pre-pubescent females. I figured that pre-pubescent girls probably thought Robin was cute, or else they had a crush on Batman and would resent my character.

"It turned out that they were right. Whenever I did public appearances, it was the little girls who came up to me. Once one of them said to me, 'Miss Craig, from now on, every time I see someone kicked in the face, I'll think of you.' I know she meant it as a compliment, but I was horrified."

Kicking thugs in the face or knocking them over the head with breakaway objects was as tough as Batgirl was allowed to be, since Horwitz was insistent Craig *not* be modeled after Honey West (Anne Francis) or *The Avengers*' Emma Peel (Diana Rigg), two contemporary TV heroines he felt were lacking in femininity.

"Howie was a funny man," recalls Craig. "He had a wife and three daughters, and he wanted them all to be very feminine. So, he specifically said that Batgirl was not to do any karate, kung fu, any sort of martial arts-type stuff. That wasn't ladylike to him. I was allowed to kick the bad guys in a sort of high-kick, ballet manner—my ballet training *really* came in handy—or spin into them and waste them, but I was supposed to be able to sneak out of their grasp before any punches were thrown. Consequently, I had an easier time talking Howie into letting me do my own stunts."

Before Batgirl was added to *Batman*'s roster of characters, she was unveiled as part of a 15-minute presentation film made for ABC executives. For the film, Craig wore a mask with pointed edges that left marks on her cheeks and "made me look as though I had been crying for a week." (It was modified for the series.) She recalls vividly what happened on the day of filming. "I was terribly excited about going to work. I woke up, rushed to the bathroom—and promptly slammed my foot into a chair and broke my little toe. Since it was understood that I was going to be doing my own



Batgirl Art: Carmine Infantino/Copyright 1966 National Periodical Publications Inc.

stunts on the show. I was told that I was to jump through a candy glass window as part of this presentation film. I did the stunt on the first take, and the stunt supervisor was so happy for me that he ran over to hug me—and stepped on my broken toe!

"As I was getting dressed to change into the Barbara Gordon character, Howie, who felt that I *shouldn't* be doing my own stunts, looked and saw that I was purple up to my ankle. And he figured I did it doing the stunt; there was no convincing him otherwise. So, he told me they were going to hire a stunt girl for me, which they did—for *two* segments. She got another job and I went back to doing what I wanted to do."

In the presentation film, according to Craig, Batgirl was a "little saucier, she had a touch of Eve Arden. She wasn't exactly condescending to Batman, but she had a 'I'm better able to do things than you are' attitude, treating him as if he were less than capable and finding it amusing. He was also somewhat sexy; he appealed to her."

The sparks generated between Batgirl and Batman in the presentation film were never explored in the series' third (and final) season—a case of too many characters competing for screen time, Craig believes. "Between Adam and Burt Ward and me and Alan Napier [as the butler, Alfred] and my father [Neil Hamilton as Commissioner Gordon] and the police chief [Stafford Repp] and the guest star, if they just said hello to one another, you filled up a half-hour. My relationship with Batman became more one-dimensional, which was OK, since it was a comic book."

Doing her own stunts included riding the customized Yamaha that served as her Batgirlcycle, a handful to maneuver due to its weight. "That thing weighed about 350 pounds,' Craig explains with a grimace. "When I got it off its center of gravity, I would have to drop it and pick it up because I wasn't strong enough to wrestle it back to its upright position. Because the shocks had to be taken off to accommodate all the customizing, whenever I hit a pebble, it was like jumping stiff-legged off a table.'

In one episode, Craig was supposed to topple a wall leading from her alter-ego's apartment—made of mock brick that lowered like a drawbridge. Only when it came time for a take, the wall failed to lower, and she came close to crashing the motorcycle through it. (Luckily, she hit the brakes in time.) Incident number two occurred during the filming of an episode starring Vincent Price as Egghead. In the scene, Craig was directed to stop the bike at Egghead's feet, but instead, it lurched forward 'like a rabbit" and ran over the actor s instep. Price's immediate reaction to an embarrassed Craig: "Had I known we were going to do it this way, I would have shouted *ole*!" She sent him a bottle of Dom Perignon the next day with a note that read: 'If you don't want to drink it, soak your foot in it.'

Working on *Batman*, which Craig remembers in "wonderful, glowing terms,' gave her a golden opportunity to work with performers she might not otherwise have met. "If it hadn't been for *Batman*, I would probably have never worked with Milton Berle [Louie the Lilac], Ethel Merman [Lola Lasagne] and Burgess Meredith [the Penguin]," she explains. The only sourpuss guest star she dealt with was Rudy Vallee, who played Lord Ffogg. "He was a pain in the butt," she remarks, bellowing with laughter. "God! He was such a churl! He was this little old cranky man. He didn't interact with anyone, and when he did, all he could manage was a snarl. And he did a three-parter, so it was like we were *never* going to get rid of him."

Star Trek Photo: Copyright 1969 Paramount Pictures & Norway Corp.

Maybe as a green Orion slave girl in "Whom Gods Destroy," Craig could titillate *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk, but actually working under all that makeup "was just hideous."

Craig Photo Courtesy Yvonne Craig

"When we were doing *Batman*, it was just a job," recalls Yvonne Craig. "I didn't know I would still be talking about Batgirl 20 years later."

Despite the addition of Batgirl to the show, the bloom was off the rose for *Batman*. The show's ratings continued to slide, even against its less-than-formidable competition, *Cimarron Strip*, a Western toplining Stuart Whitman, and *Daniel Boone*, starring Fess Parker. Was she aware the show was

in trouble? "I must say I never paid attention to that," she says. "I don't know if Burt and Adam were aware of it. No one talked about it. I know someone who had access to all the files and letters that were written back and forth between ABC and 20th Century Fox/Greenway Productions [Dozier's company], and apparently, they were going wildly overbudget all the time. It was a very expensive show to do. ABC did not feel it was cost-effective anymore.

"So, when we left for Thanksgiving in November, we didn't know if we were going to do another season or not. We didn't even say goodbye to one another because we didn't know that it might be our last season. And then, we weren't picked up.

"I understood that later, when my agent called and told me *Batman* had not been renewed, NBC called the network and said they would take the show *if* the sets were still standing. Unfortunately, they had already bulldozed the Batcave—I heard it was an $800,000 investment on ABC's part — so that was that."

When asked about her reaction to *Batman* when she first watched it, Craig says, "All I could fixate on was the fact that the guy who played Batman had a paunch. I recall saying to myself, 'I can't believe that this guy has a big stomach in certain shots.' What I didn't realize then, of course, was that it was Adam's stunt double.

"I finally met Adam West [see STARLOG #117] when we shot the 15-minute presentation. He has this wonderfully dry sense of humor. He said to me [imitating West's halting delivery], 'Oh...you have..ballet dancer's..legs. I like...ballet dancer's..legs," she laughs. "He was charming. Later, he said, 'Make sure that I don't block your keylight, I'm very broad-shouldered.' And I thought, 'Shouldn't somebody else be saying that?' But, it turned out that it was not vanity on his part; he *is* very broad-shouldered. When I stood behind him, I looked like I was in blackface; there was *no* light. I also realized that Adam had a very nice physique. It was Hubie Kerns, his stunt double, who was about 30 years older than Adam, who had the gut."

As for Burt Ward (STARLOG #124), Craig remembers, "He was...weary. I started to shake hands with him when we were introduced, but he didn't offer his hand to me. I found that really peculiar. Knowing that this was the first job he had ever had, I think he felt threatened. But it was the only time he was anything less than wonderful. Once shooting was underway, he seemed to warm up to me. And he was a doll from that day forward."

Craig has done her part for the *Batman* TV series revival, filming wraparounds for TV stations with Julie Newmar (STARLOG #148), Adam West and Burt Ward, and making guest appearances at conventions. At one, she was approached by DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz, who pointed at her and said, "I created you." Replied a boggled Craig, " 'My mother and father would like to know about you.' Then, he clarified things and explained that he had created Batgirl for the comics. My guess is that the producers [of *Batman*] knew they were going to introduce Batgirl, so they worked out something with Julius to unveil her in the comics beforehand.'

At the convention, she was informed that her comic-book counterpart was about to undergo a significant change. Recalls Craig, "They had an advance copy of [*The Killing Joke*] and asked if I wanted to see it. I said, 'Sure.' Then, I read it and found out that Batgirl gets hit by a bullet and is

Art: Carmine Infantino

paralyzed. I was *horrified*. I would've preferred they had killed off the character rather than do something strange like leave her paralyzed for life."

Does she feel that death is necessary in comic books? "I don't see anything wrong with death in comic books, but then I have a strange outlook on death. I truly believe that it's the same as life, that it's all a big circle in the sense that you're a certain entity now, then that body quits and you get rid of it, and you become something else. I'm never really very upset about anybody dying; I figure they're now off a very chaotic planet.

"Death is part of life, and children need to know about it. What they *don't* need to be exposed to is violent death and torture and maiming, all of that stuff. Children need to know

Art: Carmine Infantino

about death so that they can be comfortable with it. Most people don't want to discuss it or acknowledge it, but it's healthier when you do."

Was playing Batgirl fun, or just a job? "It was a fun *job*," Craig smiles. "But when we were doing it, it was just a job, just one of many. I didn't know I would still be talking about Batgirl 20 years later. I'm certainly *not* talking about *Peter Loves Mary* [a 1960 NBC sitcom on which she appeared]. I have a feeling that when you're a writer and you write something, you're just doing the work. If it turns out to last 100 years, you're probably shocked out of your mind."

Even today, the actress continues to be noticed by fans on the street. "People recognize me, and always have. Going through customs in London last year on my return from Africa, a young man behind the counter looked at me and said, 'I know you! You were Batgirl!' " In fact, Batfans approach her "even when I look as if I've been run over by a truck: hair askew, no makeup on, looking really awful. When I think I look really spiffy, *nobody* recognizes me! That must mean I looked *really* crappy on film!"

Looking back, she feels that "Batgirl was probably a good role model. She was take-charge and quick to assess a situation and take action on it. And she wasn't violent—she was wiley and quick-witted. As Barbara Gordon, she was efficient and independent. She lived by herself in a great apartment, and she was close to her father without being 'daddy's little girl.' But at the same time, I was playing the role, none of that came to mind. And who can say that any of it was deliberate on the writers' part?

"None of us had any idea *Batman* would stand the test of time," admits Yvonne Craig wistfully. "Adam says he knew from the start it was going to be a classic. I remember saying at the time, 'Oh, Adam, get serious!' I figured the kids didn't know who was under those masks, and they didn't really care.

'I'm happy to say that I was wrong."

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GRAY

The days of lurid movie campaigns and grisly movie art are all behind us now; the entire industry relies more and more upon snappy photo compositions and perfectly exposed mugs to entice the theatergoer or video renter. Tis' a pity as it was one of those ghastly pieces of art that suckered fans into theaters some 20 years ago to see *Brain of Blood*. Terrible film, but what a poster! A mad doctor zapping a hideous creature menacing a young heroine. And it was none other than comic vet Gray Morrow whose flair for the sensational conned youngsters out of the admission price.

A scenic journey through New Jersey's Delaware Water Gap and the trails of Pennsylvania's Catskills takes one to the artist's current residence, comfortably settled on 14 acres of wooded beauty, which he shares with his wife, Pocho. An engraved wooden sign greets all, declaring this is Camelot. Two buildings occupy the picturesque landscape, one being the artist's studio. Inside, the walls are covered; original art by the genre giants stun the eyes. This *is* Camelot!

Unquestionably one of the premier science-fiction artists for three decades, Morrow's distinctive style was a natural progression from a wondrous childhood spent in his birthplace of Fort Wayne, Indiana during the 1930s and '40s.

"I don't know if anyone remembers *Holiday* magazine but it chose Fort Wayne as the most typical American city," the pipe-smoking Morrow smiles. "It was an ideal childhood. My father was a veterinarian and at one point owned a riding academy, which gave me a great interest in horses and characters that involved themselves with horses. I met real deputy sheriffs, rodeo cowboys and these larger-than-life people.

"The local eye-strain was the State Theater. I would cut lawns for 50 cents and just couldn't wait to spend it to see *Captain Marvel*, *Flash Gordon*, *Spy Smasher*. To me, it was *unbelievable* seeing these things on the screen. Of course, I was disappointed because these guys might have had bags in their tights and weren't exactly the re-creation on film of the two-dimensional characters. *But who cared?* They were moving and alive."

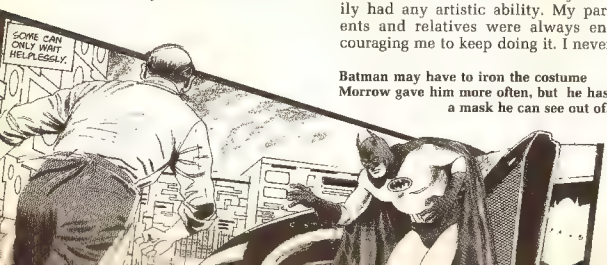
He explored Tarzan's jungle and tamed the Wild West in his search for high adventure.

Art: Gray Morrow/Don Kraar/Trademark & Copyright 1984 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.

"*Tarzan* is something I loved as a kid," notes Gray Morrow. "I never dreamed I would work on it."

Inevitably, the tale that rattles every fan's nerves most is uttered. "I always read the Sunday funnies," Morrow grins. "And aside from the movies, I spent my money on comic books. As soon as a pile got higher than my knee, my mother would throw them out! You never thought anything about it because there were always more. I never thought of myself as a collector."

Morrow's ability with a pen made itself known early on. Inspired by what he read and saw, "I found myself doodling and copying everything," the artist reflects. "I don't know where it came from. No one else in my family had any artistic ability. My parents and relatives were always encouraging me to keep doing it. I never



Batman may have to iron the costume Morrow gave him more often, but he has a mask he can see out of.

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MAT 204

Art: Courtesy Sam Sherman

"On the campaign for *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, Sam Sherman said, 'Lots of drip, Gray,' " Morrow recalls. "He needed blood and drip."

Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

Morrow

By TIM FERRANTE

AH'M WORKIN' AS FAST AS AH CAN, ADMIRAL--
--BUT AH'M UNDER A LOT O' PRESSURE HERE!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT MAKING IT PRETTY, SCOTTY--
--JUST GET IT DONE!

Photo. Tim Ferrante

had any realistic idea of doing anything with it until I was in high school. Before that, I wanted to be a district attorney!"

Having no formal training and enrolling in feeble high school art classes, Morrow began to sense he was destined for the art world. He just didn't know how or where he would fit. "As soon as I graduated, I

Star Trek Art: Copyright 1986 Paramount Pictures/DC Comics

"When it comes to sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, I want to do more than draw a pretty picture," says Gray Morrow. "I want to tell a story."

Photo. Tim Ferrante

took off for Chicago because it was the nearest large city. I hadn't a clue on what a portfolio was or how to present yourself as an artist. My first job was working in the bullpen of the second largest ad agency in the city. I was to prepare art for presentation to various clients, which translates to nothing more than matting and framing other people's work."

Morrow has already served several times with the *Enterprise* crew, and the results of his latest mission with them appear in this year's *Star Trek Annual*.

In an era of comic art icons, Morrow's influences and inspirations were diverse. "Obviously, I loved Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. On the other end of the scale, I loved people like Virgil Partch, one of the greatest gag cartoonists of the '40s. We rave today about Gary Larson, but Partch did things that Larson couldn't approach—completely mad, way-out stuff. I can appreciate Larson and his bizarre touch, but I still draw from my influences in the '30s and '40s."

A residual effect of the framing job was Morrow's opportunity to see how the pros worked, something which opened new venues for his growth as an artist. "Having done cartoons for the high school paper and local ad companies, the agency job showed me what the real world was like," Morrow assesses while relighting his pipe. "The comics were what I really wanted to do, but here was another area I hadn't investigated."

After three lessons with the Famous Artists Course correspondence school and two months of attending the Chicago Academy of Fine Art, where Morrow was told his talents needed no help and to get out in the field and start working, he moved to New York City. "This was during the period of the Comics Code formation and William Gaines being on trial. The word 'horror' was dirty and comics were in such low regard. I worked for a half-dozen or so comic companies before they went under. At the time, Marvel was known as Timely and they were putting out things with words like 'adventure, 'suspense' and 'mystery' in the title. Just don't call it horror!" he laughs. "I knew the military was going to be drafting me soon, so I didn't try to set up any permanent relations with the publishers, especially the way they were folding.

"There was a strange little outfit called Triangle that specialized in fantasy fiction. They were printing a lot of Robert E. Howard's stuff and were doing poorly with it. They decided to see what could be done with Conan in comic-book form. I had never heard of Conan before, so they gave me Howard's 'Tower of the Elephant' and told me to come up with a comic based on it. It was the first appearance of Conan in comic-book form. The problem was they *never* printed the comic," Morrow winces. "I got paid for it, but today, it must be sitting on a shelf somewhere getting moldy."

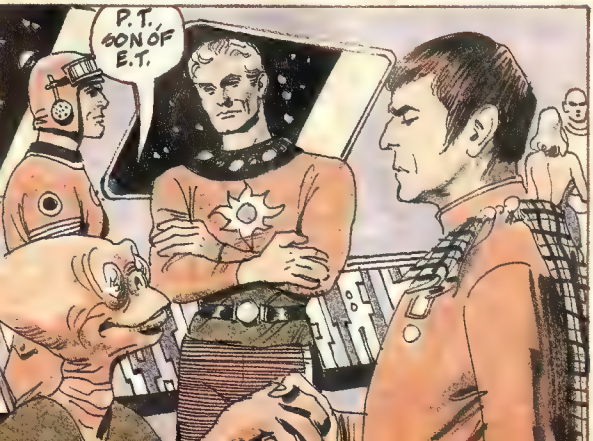
All was quiet in Korea during Morrow's stay, courtesy of the United States Army. "In the military, I took up painting. Having had no previous instruction, I just started on my own. I gathered some nice Chinese brushes and materials that were foreign to me and started painting on my off-hours. Suddenly, I began getting commis-

***Dreamwalker* was a chance to do a '30s character like The Shadow," says Morrow.**

Photo: Tim Ferrante

Thanks to the Army, Morrow began painting, although his subjects have hardly been standard regulation issue.

All Art: Gray Morrow



A meeting of minds you're not likely to find in the monthly *Star Trek* comic.

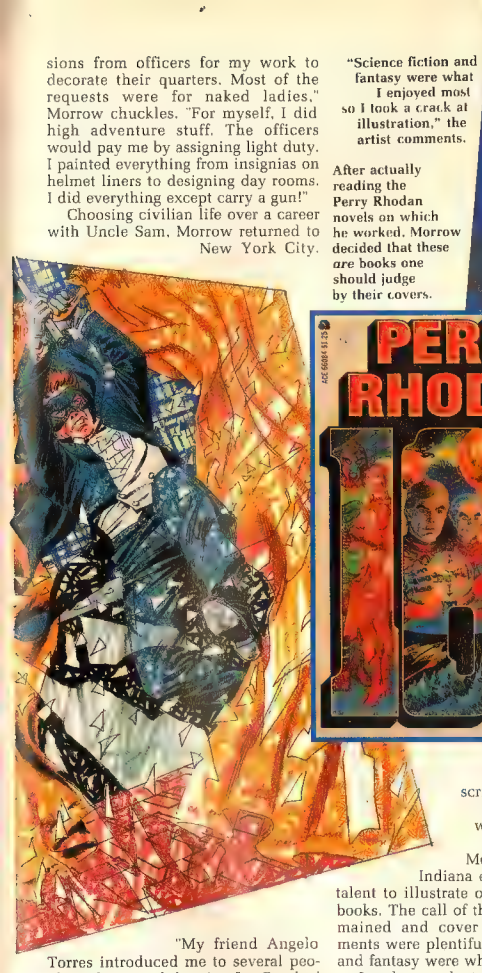
Art: Copyright 1990 Cracked Magazine
Dreamwalker Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group

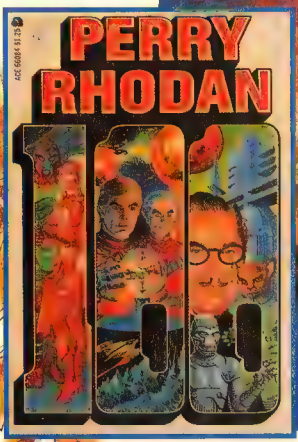
sions from officers for my work to decorate their quarters. Most of the requests were for naked ladies," Morrow chuckles. "For myself, I did high adventure stuff. The officers would pay me by assigning light duty. I painted everything from insignias on helmet liners to designing day rooms. I did everything except carry a gun!"

Choosing civilian life over a career with Uncle Sam, Morrow returned to New York City.

"Science fiction and fantasy were what I enjoyed most so I took a crack at illustration," the artist comments.

After actually reading the Perry Rhodan novels on which he worked, Morrow decided that these *are* books one should judge by their covers.





Art: Ace Books

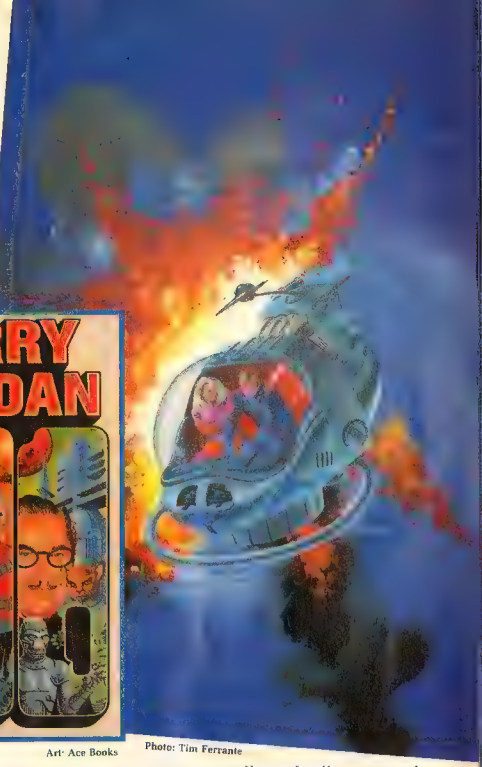


Photo: Tim Ferrante

"My friend Angelo Torres introduced me to several people and I started drawing for *Cracked* magazine and Gilberton Publishing, better known as [the original] *Classics Illustrated*. Basically, I'm a storyteller," Morrow notes, switching over from pipe to cigar and leaning on his drawing board. "I'm not a very verbal person in society, but when it comes to sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, I want to do more than draw a pretty picture. I want to tell a story.

"At Gilberton, the contributing artists were not considered important. It was company policy not to sign your work. Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Angelo Torres all did illustrating, but it then became *Classics* material. They would give you a script and allow you to do pretty much what you wanted."

The Bobbs Merrill Company in Indiana enlisted Morrow's talent to illustrate over 50 children's books. The call of the paint brush remained and cover painting assignments were plentiful. "Science fiction and fantasy were what I enjoyed most so I took a crack at illustration. I was already doing interior work for *Galaxy*, *If...*, *Amazing*, *Worlds of Tomorrow* and conned them into letting me do some of their covers. This was my first published color work.

"Somewhere during that period, Russ Jones told me of a magazine starting up that would bypass the Comics Code. The magazine was *Creepy* and the company was Warren Publishing. Jim Warren was a crazy man, a fun man. You never knew if he would like something you did or hate it or make a scene when you brought it in. He used to give year-end parties to celebrate another year of publishing. He was quite flamboyant," Morrow recollects fondly. "Around that time, Forry Ackerman [editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine and creator of *Vampirella*] was agenting the popular Perry Rhodan book series. Ace Books bought them up and for a while, they sold like crazy. I was hired to do the cover paintings, up to three a month. I'll never understand why they sold because I sat down and tried to read them and frankly, I thought they were god-awful!"

Comments Morrow, "It's interesting. During all the late nights, the coffee and bullshit sessions, the booze sessions, we all felt we were working in a vacuum and that nobody gave a damn about what we were doing. We were basically working for ourselves and by and large, felt lucky we were able to do just that. Myself, Angelo, Al Williamson, Wally Wood; we would all get together and curse the publishers for not letting us have our own copyrights to produce our own stuff. We would draw the assignments, hand them in and cash the checks. But when we would get together, we would draw things that amused *us*."

Morrow also found employment as a ghost artist on a variety of daily strips. "Johnny Prentice was illustrating *Rip Kirby* and he, being a social animal, wanted time away. He used to average only a daily a day which kept him from his socializing and golf playing. I wound up doing three weeks out of a month for about two years. I ghosted one week of *Prince Valiant* when Hal Foster decided to retire. The syndicate wanted to keep the strip running and asked Foster to decide on who would continue in his wake. I was nominated, Wally Wood, John Cullen Murphy. Unbeknownst to the rest of us, Murphy was Hal Foster's neighbor and it was a foregone conclusion that he would continue the strip. Foster had only been going through the motions to satisfy the syndicate.

"I worked on *Friday Foster* when the regular artist was chronically late and causing cancellations from some papers. Originally an Alex Raymond daily, *Secret Agent X-9* was drawn for years by Al Williamson and I ghosted for him on occasion using his style. *Big Ben Bolt* was a prize fighter strip I ghosted in an on-again off-again arrangement."

Through mutal friend Alan Barbour, Morrow was introduced to exploitation filmmaker Samuel M. Sherman (FANGORIA #29) whose Independent-International Pictures was feeding the hungry drive-in circuits. Sherman was in need of an exceptional artist whose craft could heighten and excite the moviegoing public. "I think 90%of my movie poster work was for Sam Sherman," Morrow explains. "He had a problem with a previous artist who hung him up terribly. On the campaign for *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, Sam said, 'Lots of drip, Gray.' He needed blood and drip."

Photo Tim Perrault

Producer Sherman vividly remembers the days of campaign design and Morrow's special flair for the weird and bizarre. "I always felt it was important that the advertising look good and be attractive," Sherman obvserves. "We started using still photographs but they were never as effective as someone doing a really good painting. Gray Morrow was terrific with action, horror and science fiction. I had him do our ads, posters and color brochures. I guess his art for *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* is the most famous one we have. He did a sensational job because he lent a little more fantasy to the subject than actually existed in the film. He has done most of our art over the years." The Independent-International Morrow gallery includes posters for films like *Midnight, Angels' Wild Women, Frankenstein's Bloody Terror, Blazing Stewardesses, Nurses For Sale* and *Space Mission to the Lost Planet.*

With such a plethora of subjects and countless pages of output, what pleases Gray Morrow? "I think I've done a good Tarzan," Morrow asserts. "I take a lot of pride in that because I think it's a difficult thing to do well," referring to his eight-year stint on the once weekly strip. "The writer, Don Kraar, has done a remarkable job in transforming the story into the comic format. It's something I loved as a kid. I never dreamed I would have the opportunity to work on it.

"Something I recently did for Marvel, the *Dreamwalker* graphic novel, was a chance to do a sort of throwback to a '30s character like The Shadow. I didn't have to adhere to a pre-conceived structure. I could do it my own way. The book was written by [actors/comics scribes] Billy Mumy and Miguel Ferrer. They were specific in what they wanted and there are cameos by characters that look a lot like Jackie Gleason, Jose Ferrer [Miguel's father] and others."

Extinguishing his cigar and contemplating another round with his pipe, a smile snakes across Morrow's lips. "You know, thinking back to Timely...Williamson and I used to get a lot of Western scripts that were written by Stan Lee. In his scripts, whether it was the sheriff, the homesteader, the banker or whoever's wife, she was always named Martha. Stan seemed limited with Western names. We were all doing these comics so we started drawing Martha exactly the same. We gave her a bonnet so you couldn't really see her face. Stan never got wise that she looked *exactly* the same in different books and stories. We were waiting for him to pick up on it. We got a little more ballsy

{continued on page 74)

Art: Chuck Jones

Keeping Up With Chuck Jones

By BRIAN LOWRY

Art: Chuck Jones

Still singing Looney Tunes, the beloved animation legend confesses how the Grinch stole Christmas and why he helped frame Roger Rabbit.

Recently, on a holiday weekend, a British television station showed 10 half-hours of Chuck Jones cartoons. Remarkably, between 2.5 and 4 million viewers tuned in to the festival, dubbed *What's Up, Chuck?*

Jones, who has just completed an as-yet untitled biography, initially thought it might make a fitting handle for the book, then thought better of it. "That's all right in England, because 'upchuck' doesn't mean the same thing," he notes wryly. "Right now, I call the book *The Road Runner, the Egg and I*, but I don't know."

The self-effacing, gentle humor is only one of the trademarks of Jones, a man who seems like a college professor yet who built a reputation directing cartoons that many, naively, think were made just for children. However, as Jones and any of his Warner Brothers would quickly tell you, the target audience wasn't youngsters, but themselves, and the funny bones they felt it most important to tickle—to be true to their work and to themselves—were their own.

Not surprisingly, then, the Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Road Runner cartoons that flourished in the 1930s, '40s and '50s became more than just children's fare. Many have been taken to heart by today's most prestigious filmmakers, considered six-minute gems to be studied and treasured.

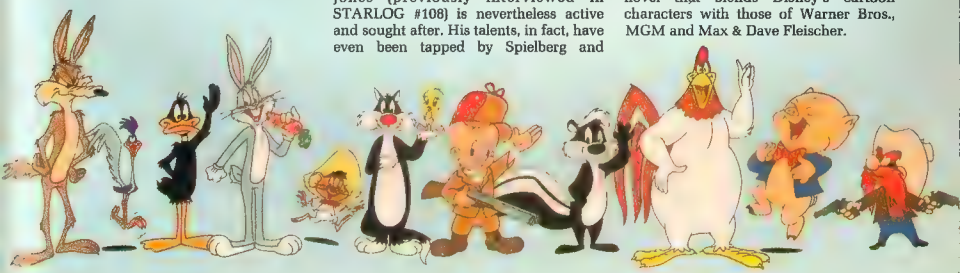
Jones himself has become treasured in a similar fashion. He spends much of his time today lecturing and receiving various awards—which, he would have no problem telling you, is a function of both appreciation of his work and living long enough to take in the often-belated applause.

Many filmmakers have included tributes to Jones in their films, be it Steven Spielberg using clips from *Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century* in *Close Encounters* to the cameos Jones has essayed in Joe Dante's films, the most recent being a supermarket checkout line customer in *Innerspace*. (Jones, perhaps fortuitously, was unavailable for *Explorers*, so Dante simply named the school "Charles M. Jones Junior High.")

Yet despite being well into his 70s, Jones (previously interviewed in STARLOG #108) is nevertheless active and sought after. His talents, in fact, have even been tapped by Spielberg and Robert Zemeckis as a consultant on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, a live-action animated epic based on the Gary Wolf novel that blends Disney's cartoon characters with those of Warner Bros., MGM and Max & Dave Fleischer.

Photo: David Hutchison

Chuck & Linda Jones celebrate their very animated lives at a NYC reception held at T.R.'s Gallery.



Art: Chuck Jones

"The Road Runner," explains Jones, "is the Coyote's Holy Grail. He's just trying to get something to eat."

All Chuck Jones Prints: Courtesy Linda Jones Enterprises

All Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 Warner Bros. Inc.

"I was really hired just to let them know how to handle the Warner Bros. characters," Jones comments, minimizing his involvement. "They really just play cameo roles, as I understand it."

Jones, in fact, worked with Zemeckis in planning an eagerly awaited sequence in which two of the screen's most-famous fowls—Donald Duck and Daffy Duck—appear together playing dual pianos. "It's a funny idea," Jones says. "I hope that stays in."

As he recalls it, Jones and the other Warner animators were fascinated by Disney's feature approach to animation but similarly downplayed their own work. "I never thought of the Disney characters at all," he says. "*None* of us did. It never even occurred to us that we were in the same business. If there was such a comparison, we thought we were doing Model T Fords while they were doing Ferraris.

"We never really were in competition with anybody, even with each other—the reason for that being because of what I called 'the jam session,' where other writers and directors would fire ideas at your premise. The result was it was almost impossible to feel yourself in competition with someone when you were helping them."

The Warner Bros. fraternity, when Jones joined it in the 1930s and '40s, included such memorable names as Bob Clampett, Tex Avery, Michael Maltese and Friz Freleng. Clampett, however, left the studio in 1946, shortly after Avery moved to MGM.

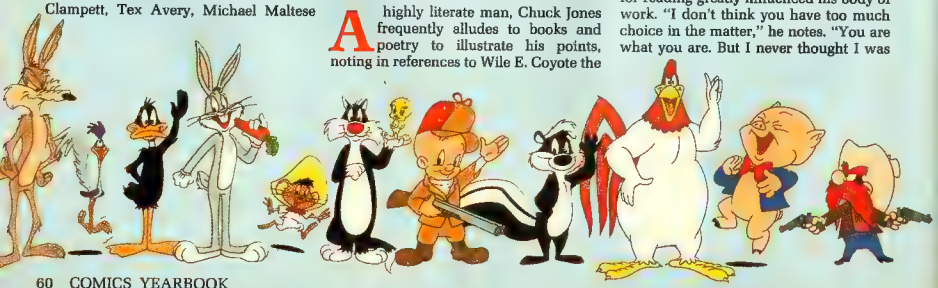
Jones worked his way up from the bottom, washing cels before becoming an animator and, eventually, a director. "Tex had a magnificent sense of timing, as did Friz," he recalls. "I animated for both of them, so I learned a great deal about timing, though I didn't utilize it the same way they did. Tex and Clampett were less concerned with personality in their characters than with [funny] business."

While Avery and Clampett created Bugs Bunny, for example, it was Jones who defined the character and gave him the personality that endures to this day. Clampett, in fact, only did four Bugs Bunny cartoons and curiously enough, Avery only did three or four. "He didn't really understand [Bugs]," Jones notes. "If you look at the second one he made, 'Tortoise Meets Hare,' Bugs is an absolute patsy. The turtle won all the battles and Bugs ends up looking like a fool."

Jones learned things also as he went along. In the Road Runner cartoon series, for example, the first installment has the Road Runner picking up a manhole cover and letting the Coyote run into it. "I realized immediately that that was wrong, that the Road Runner should never do anything more than say, 'Beep beep,' " Jones observes.

A highly literate man, Chuck Jones frequently alludes to books and poetry to illustrate his points, noting in references to Wile E. Coyote the line: "A fanatic is somebody who redoubles his effort when he has forgotten his aim."

It has been proposed that his fondness for reading greatly influenced his body of work. "I don't think you have too much choice in the matter," he notes. "You are what you are. But I never thought I was



"He's a heroic character," observes Jones of the Acme-clad Wile E. Coyote. "I admire him because he keeps trying all the time."

Daffy meets another famous waterfowl, Donald—*not* this wooden stunt-double—in the upcoming *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*

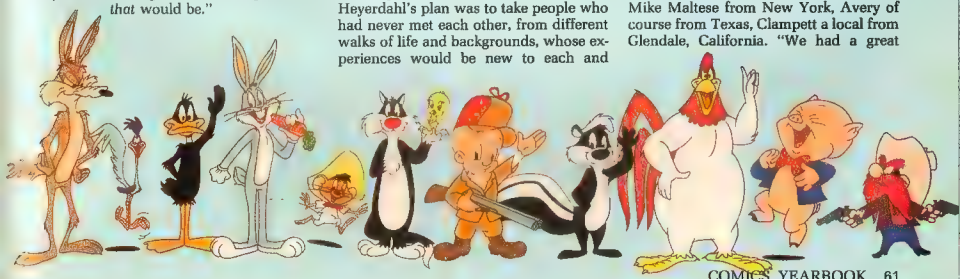
Art: Chuck Jones

doing anything that would benefit mankind."

Similarly, when he lectures, Jones says people often find some sort of message in his work, though "I can't imagine what *that* would be."

Nevertheless, Jones finds plenty of allusions between both literary and nonfiction worlds and his own life. Take the *Kon-Tiki*, the small raft that Thor Heyerdahl piloted across the ocean. Heyerdahl's plan was to take people who had never met each other, from different walks of life and backgrounds, whose experiences would be new to each and whose stories and jokes would all be fresh. "What Heyerdahl did intellectually, the group at Warner Bros did inadvertently," Jones observes.

There was Freleng, from Kansas City, Mike Maltese from New York, Avery of course from Texas, Clampett a local from Glendale, California. "We had a great



Art: Chuck Jones

"All comedy is based not on how you succeed, but how you don't succeed," Jones says.

deal to offer each other because we came from such different backgrounds."

One thing all the animators shared was a delight in characterization. They made their characters suffer for art. "What we looked for was not how to do things right, but how to do things *wrong*. That was the absolute: It's about *not* catching a Road Runner, or *not* getting a girl, in Pepe LePew's case," he remarks. "That's the basis of all comedy. All comedy is based not on how you succeed, but how you *don't* succeed.

"Also, comedy is always based on trivial pursuits, and we used that phrase before the game did. It's about getting a girl, or getting something to eat—always simple things."

Simply speaking, there's Jones' literate, updated, post-facto description of Bugs Bunny: "If you took Rex Harrison playing Professor Higgins (from *My Fair Lady*), D'Artagnan and Dorothy Parker and stuffed them in a rabbitskin, you would have Bugs."

While Bugs has been the most enduring character, Jones also put his stamp on Daffy Duck, directing the three Bugs-Daffy team-ups of the '50s, and such memorable one-shots as "One Froggy Evening," where a multi-talented amphibian, Michigan J. Frogg, drives a man to ruin.

Jones is equally proud, however, of some of the work he did after leaving Warner Bros., including such specials as *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *The Cricket in Times Square* and *Riki Tiki-Tavi*.

As to *Grinch*, Jones had to convince Dr. Seuss, with whom he had worked before World War II, to allow him to adapt the character. "I had to go down there and persuade him because he had some unfortunate experiences before the war," Jones recalls. "He was kind of off on Hollywood, but I told him if he didn't like the storyboards, he could back out of it."

Jones sold Seuss, but then had to find sponsors to support the show, and at first, the prospects were as cold as the Grinch's heart. He recalls making "20 to 25 presentations" to prospective clients before he found one who would buy it.

One of the great coups of that production involved the vocal casting of Boris Karloff. "Many people didn't realize Karloff had this magnificent speaking voice. He had done a lot of wonderful children's programming on records, though I don't believe that good programming for children is ever 'children's programming,' " notes Jones.

"I told Karloff I was going to have him read the entire thing as if he were reading poetry, because of course it *was* poetry. Then, what I did for the Grinch was take the highs out, creating a more gravelly voice. That gave a kind of rhythm to it. I didn't want two different people reading those lines."

Art: Chuck Jones

A longtime critic of the current state of animation, Jones now believes that it's "healthier than it was a few years ago."

To illustrate that contention, Jones points to Don Bluth, now working on features at full steam, and the young cadre of Disney animators who created *The Great Mouse Detective*, "a wonderful picture," Jones says approvingly. "The villain, Ratigan, was just a brilliant piece of animation, and then at the end, they blended the characters with computer animation on the clock, which is a pretty good example of what they can do."

Still, Jones stresses that the computer will *never* capture character, the element he believes is sorely lacking from the numerous cartoons produced today for network television and syndication.

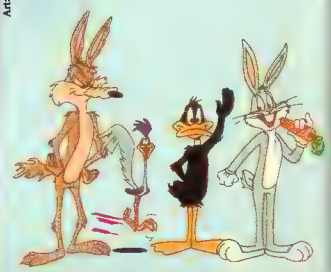
"The thing that's terribly important about all animation is that animated characters are seldom funny to look at," he opines. "Our characters and Disney characters and Tom and Jerry were not funny to look at, it was what they *did* that made them funny.

"In [new cartoons], they try to draw them funny, and they're not even funnily drawn. That's what I like about Ralph Bakshi [now doing *Mighty Mouse* for Saturday morning]. He used voices that didn't apply to the characters and made the movements funny, even with the obvious restrictions.

"Bakshi has brought some fun to it. He loves animators, and I like *anybody* who loves animators. That's the heart of our business. Being a director is fine, but it comes down to animating, and I worked with some great ones."

In the good ol' days at Warner Bros., Jones relates, animators would *never* reuse footage—a common cost-saving practice among today's cartoon producers—even of a character walking. "We learned a lot by assuming that *any* action would be different from another," he says. "It goes back to the old Hindu

(continued on page 74)



The Substance of Style

Bill Sienkiewicz walked past his fans and fellows at the 20th annual San Diego Comic Con like a conquering hero.

Hands reached out to touch his, Knots of people gathered around him. Confident and hip-looking, wearing a single earring like a pirate, he moved among them gracefully, accepting his due.

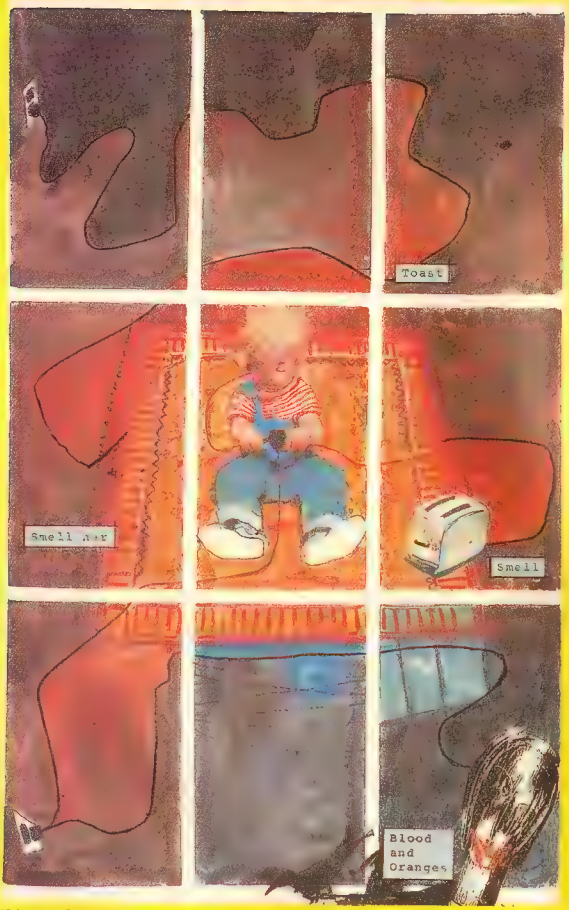
It wasn't always like this. From his beginnings on Moon Knight, *and sporadically as he experimented with* New Mutants, Elektra: Assassin, Brought to Light *and a flurry of covers in his slick, painterly style, he has been branded as an imitator of his betters, a subject that still rankles even now when he is considered on the cutting edge of cartooning. His four-issue* Stray Toasters *last year was an enigma, an angry splash of color that delighted some, angered others, and puzzled everyone. It's about mothers, sons, possessed electrical appliances and the stifling of individuality. Or maybe it's not; who's to say? Sienkiewicz says you have to draw your own conclusions.*

This interview was conducted at a noisy bar outside the Comic Con, where Sienkiewicz seemed to know people at every table. Those he didn't know seemed to know him, and watched respectfully as he passed them. Over drinks, he talked about the old criticisms, the feverish reactions to Stray Toasters, *and his intense interest in his new project with Alan Moore. But what creeps up often in his conversation is his connection to the insecure, alienated kid he once was, and his long road to personal and professional acceptance.*

While others debate his artistic merits, Bill Sienkiewicz shows no sign of slowing down.

BY [illegible]

Stray Toasters and Copyright 1988 Bill Sienkiewicz



Stray Toasters Art: Courtesy Epic Comics

"I invented my own stories, a world I was in control of," says Sienkiewicz of his early childhood, which echoes within *Stray Toasters*.

COMICS SCENE: When did you first put pen to paper, and why?

BILL SIENKIEWICZ: I first began drawing as a child, even before going to kindergarten. I remember in kindergarten drawing an Eskimo, and the other kids saying, "What a horrible drawing"—but the other kids *couldn't* draw something like that! I thought, "This is great!" I was a fat kid, a pudge, and this was something I could do that they *couldn't*. That's how it started. I drew comics before I knew what they were. I was lonely a lot. On weekends, I went to visit my grandparents and I was ostracized for being fat. So, I kept to myself and drew. I invented my own stories, a world I was in control of.

CS: What sort of world was that?

SIENKIEWICZ: My early stories were private-eye stuff, mysteries. No superheroes until four years later. They were everything I wasn't—an alter-ego that was thin, adult. There was time travel, fantasy elements to it. I was practicing, getting stuff out. My parents were encouraging, but they had a working-class background—my grandfather was a coal miner, my father worked for AT&T, my mom was a housewife. They felt I should have a real job. Mom went to school meetings, and the teacher would say, "Bill draws all the time." My mom would say, "I know, I really wish he would stop that." Mom never knew what the drawing meant. I installed antennae on TVs, did construction, but this ultimately was what I wanted to do.

CS: When did you quit TV repair and go into drawing whole-heartedly?

SIENKIEWICZ: I did odd jobs as a teenager, went to Newark School of Fine Industrial Art for two years. I didn't graduate, just got my portfolio together. I didn't want to be stuck with people pumping gas. I was a smug little bastard. I walked in [to Marvel] without an appointment and got my first job on *Moon Knight*. It was also the first job for the colorist as well [Steve Oliff]. I did four years of that. I see that as the seeds of...the beginning. The style was reminiscent of Neal Adams, and suddenly, I got lumped in with these clones. I remember feeling completely unseen, like the fat little kid I had been. I felt obliterated, full of anger. I was trying a whole lot of different techniques to validate myself and my work. There was no respect for the medium and for what I was doing. There was the issue of acceptance, plus a lot of psychology at stake. I was holding onto work as a security blanket. It forced me to find out more things about myself.

CS: After *Moon Knight*, which direction did you take?

SIENKIEWICZ: At the end of *Moon Knight*, I did *Fantastic Four* for Marvel, and *The New Mutants*. I really wanted illustration work. It wasn't the same kind of investment of time as doing a full 22 pages, and would give me a chance to experiment.

CS: Your style has been lumped in variously with that of Neal Adams, Bob Peake and Ralph Steadman. What would you call your style today?

SIENKIEWICZ: Today I'm a cubist, or today I'm this or that. Doing covers allows a great deal of experimentation for me. In some ways, I was back to that feeling of not being accepted. There was incredible pressure for me to be liked for myself, as if my work and I were inseparable. I became a perfectionist. I would get exhausted from keeping up an armor. If I could just do it, without screwing myself into the ground... It took two years before sketch work interested me more than my other work. There's no pressure in my sketchbooks. I decided to fight to have that happen in my work, letting down barriers, saying: Here it is, warts and all. It's a striving for

All Moby Dick Art: Courtesy & Copyright 1989, 1990 First Publishing, Inc

All Art: Bill Sienkiewicz

While the previous *Classics Illustrated* had presented *Moby Dick* as just a swashbuckling adventure, Bill Sienkiewicz's delves deeper.

Moon Knight: Trademark & Copyright 1983, 1989 Marvel Entertainment

Before his solo work on *Stray Toasters*, Sienkiewicz expressed his feelings of alienation with "Slow Dancing" in *Epic Illustrated*.

Slow Dancing Art: Copyright 1986 Bill Sienkiewicz/Epic Magazine

honesty, rather than getting ready for a Saturday night date in terms of visuals, having everything perfect. It's all tied up with *Stray Toasters*.

CS: Where did you get the idea for *Stray Toasters*?

SIENKIEWICZ: It wasn't any one single point. It actually started about 5 years ago as a robot story. I was influenced by Isaac Asimov. I started to read more psychology books and become more aware. It also had to do with a cathartic thing in terms of childhood experiences, and working things through. In that way, comics are really like art therapy. Peeling away the layers, the facades, getting down to the essence. There's a rage to it, a thrashing. I hope that there's a universality and objectivity, although I think it's a much more subjective work than something like the adaptation of *Dune* or *Moon Knight*. This is much more personal.

CS: *Stray Toasters* takes a dim view of motherhood, not to mention kitchen appliances. Did your Mom read it?

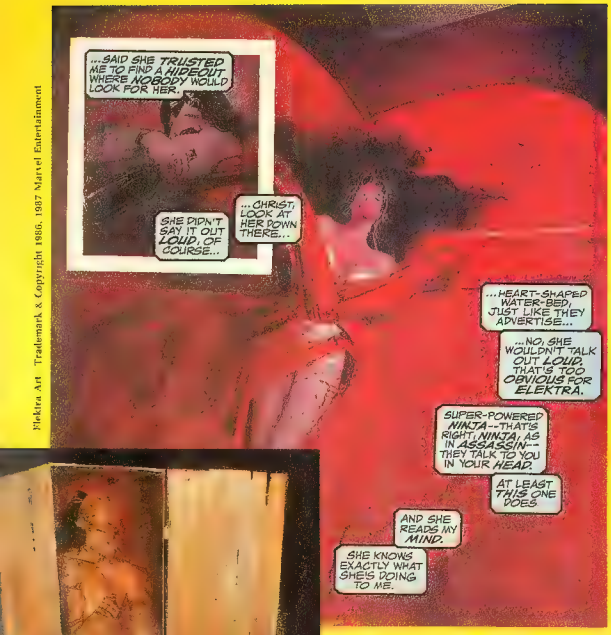
SIENKIEWICZ: I don't think she ever did; I gave it to her, but she never commented on it. She just died recently; she didn't see it after all.

CS: Well, maybe she did read it and wasn't sure how to respond. What's the deal with all those possessed appliances?

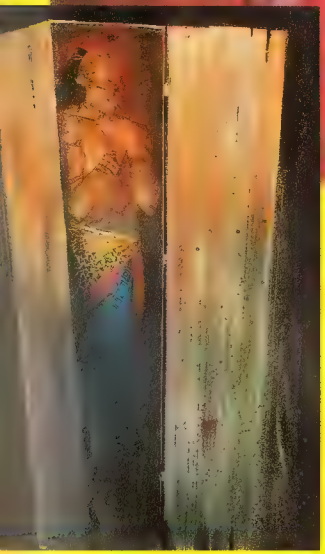
SIENKIEWICZ: The fact that machines are associated with the kitchen, and mother is associated with the house, kitchens. Plus machines are non-human. A toaster is basically something you plug in and warm up. This is a story of dehumanization, where humanity and emotions are not dealt with. People are

Beginning with a style reminiscent of Neal Adams, Sienkiewicz soon felt that he became lost in the shadows with *Moon Knight*.

Elektra Art Trademark & Copyright 1996, 1997 Marvel Entertainment


...SAID SHE TRUSTED ME TO FIND A HIDEOUT WHERE NOBODY WOULD LOOK FOR HER.
...CHRIST, LOOK AT HER DOWN THERE...
SHE DIDN'T SAY IT OUT LOUD, OF COURSE...
...HEART-SHAPED WATER-BED, JUST LIKE THEY ADVERTISE...
...NO, SHE WOULDN'T TALK OUT LOUD. THAT'S TOO OBVIOUS FOR ELEKTRA.
SUPER-POWERED NINJA--THAT'S RIGHT, NINJA, AS IN ASSASSIN--THEY TALK TO YOU IN YOUR HEAD.
AT LEAST THIS ONE DOES.
AND SHE READS MY MIND.
SHE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT SHE'S DOING TO ME.

Working with Frank Miller on *Elektra: Assassin* allowed Sienkiewicz to give a different subtext to superheroics.



"Comics are really art therapy," reveals Sienkiewicz. "Peeling away the layers, the facades, getting down to the essence."

relegated to the position of machines—they're turned on, warmed up and they function, all the while denying a certain emotional core. If the element of the toaster is burned out you pull the plug and toss it, which is another analogy for people.

CS: *Stray Toasters* isn't the first time you both wrote and drew, though.

SIENKIEWICZ: I wrote and drew a story called "Slow Dancing" for the last issue of *Epic Illustrated*. In a certain way, it's about the same thing as *Stray Toasters*. In the story, touching and sexuality is illegal because of society's structure. People get together in clandestine meetings and they slow dance, which is a big deal, because physicality at all is frowned upon. *Stray Toasters* is part of a book I was going to work on, to be called *Alien Nation*, about how people don't fit in but want to.

CS: It seems that the social deprivations of your childhood have crept into the themes of your work today.

SIENKIEWICZ: The problem is, these things stay with you. I don't know how much of the eternal viewpoint it forms, but it can definitely color or discolor your performance or the quality of your life. I don't know if it goes so far as to *control* your life.

CS: Issues of control are central in *Stray Toasters*, where possessed appliances take over people and can rape and murder them. And the fact that you both wrote and drew it shows a degree of personal control. Is being in control important to you?

SIENKIEWICZ: Having control is very liberating, also very frightening, because many limitations are internal. The walls you put up are internal, it has to do with facing fears of exposure. The point is not to dump a load of shit, but to make a good story, in terms of pushing a kind of envelope. The integrity and honesty of the work is up to me.

CS: How do you work? How do you organize your ideas?

SIENKIEWICZ: I work all different ways. Sometimes, I'll just write. Other times, the visuals will hit me. Maybe not exact visuals, but counterpoint visuals. I try not to deal with redundancies.

CS: Your work is very personal. Is it difficult to share creatively? Who do you like to work with?

SIENKIEWICZ: The ones who take the time. There's an attrition rate—you lose people and other people come aboard. There's a vocabulary and a dialogue that goes on and never really ends. You try to find people with a simpatico point-of-view.

CS: *Stray Toasters* is, shall we say, a challenging read. What sort of reactions have you gotten?

SIENKIEWICZ: A wide variety of reactions, from, "Looks great, can't read it," to, "It's one of the most groundbreaking things I've ever seen done." Certain reviews gave it a Grade C, which is a juvenile sort of thing. Then, you have an outside source like the *London Times*, which gave it a very positive review, something about "the prickly adult potential of the form."

CS: Why do you think you've gotten so much flak?

SIENKIEWICZ: There's a certain contingent that only wants mutants and superheroes and wants all their thinking done for them. I would much rather work in dialogue and give the reader more credit and impetus to work and be more involved, give them credit for having intelligence. This is what comics are all about. It pisses me off because the ones who are complaining are not the ones who are doing them.

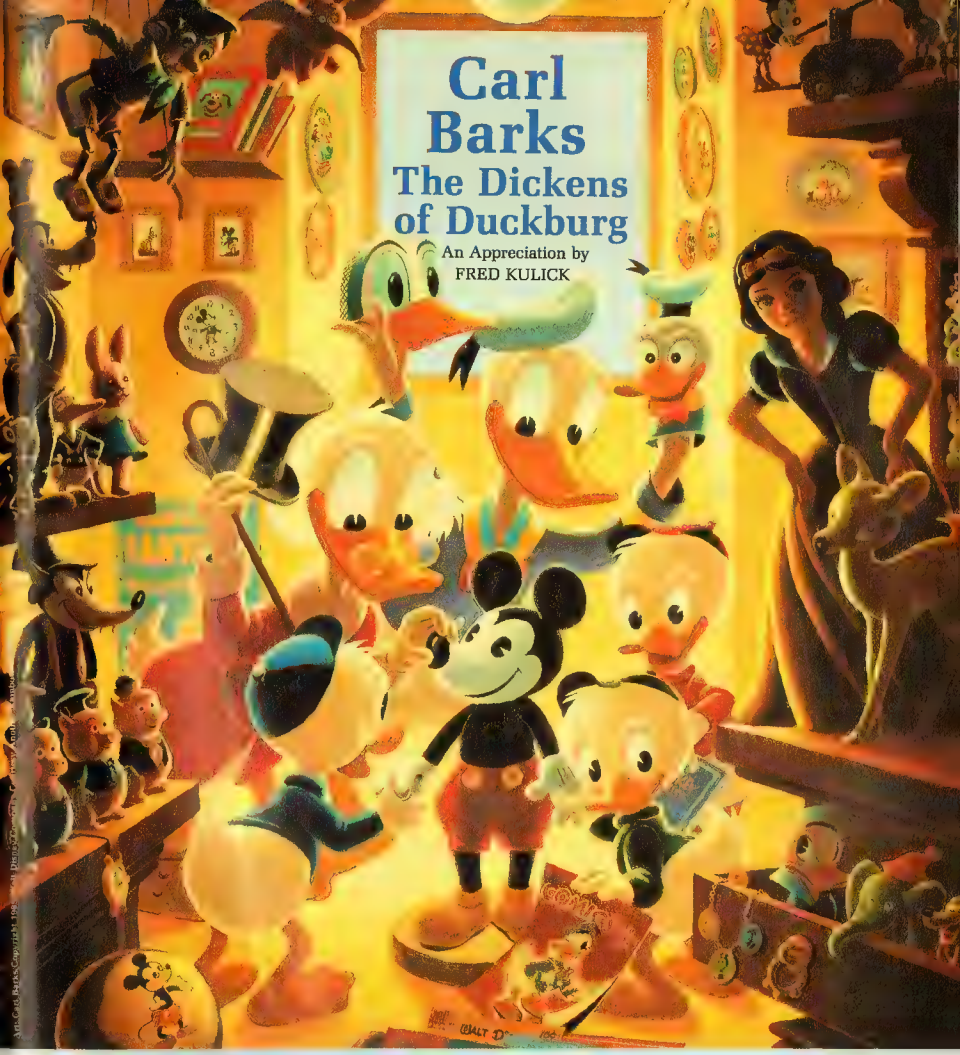
CS: And yet you have worked on various superheroes.

SIENKIEWICZ: I have no interest in it now. Superhero stuff becomes a metaphor for certain things. But you always have that mask, and it's like, why not cut out the middleman and just attack the issue without the mask? Why does a story about famine or hunger have to be about a superhero's efforts to prevent it? Why not just do it about famine or hunger? The issue itself is important enough without the superfluous stuff.

Carl Barks

The Dickens of Duckburg

An Appreciation by
FRED KULICK



Meet the man who made those mallards so memorable.

They hardly touch most of the magazines in my waiting room, but they devour my Uncle Scrooge comics! By the way, I'm a Wall Street stockbroker," a fan in New York recently remarked. "Hooray! They've begun to reprint Barks again!" writes another. "For myself and thousands of other fans, this is too good to be true: reprints of Barks!"

Fan mail like this constantly flows into the editorial offices of Gladstone Publishing Company. Yet, 47 years have passed since Carl Barks and Jack Hannah drew "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" (1942). Adapted from the rejected storyboards of the never-produced film "Morgan's Ghost," it was the first original Disney story to become a comic book. The success of that four-color adventure launched Barks' more-than-25-year career as one of the most successful writer/artists in comic history. And the appreciation of his work continues to grow. Dr. Donald Ault features Barks' work in his "Popular Narrative" course at Vanderbilt University. Thomas Andrae, an instructor in mass communications at the

Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Univèrsity of California at Berkeley, includes Barks' literature in his courses. And those are only two examples.

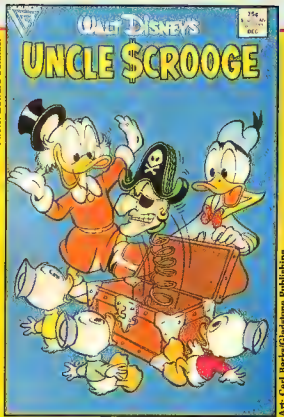
In 1985, Gladstone resurrected such titles as *Uncle Scrooge*, *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* and *Donald Duck*. Gladstone currently lists eight titles which feature the indomitable fowl and rely heavily on reprints of Barks' work. Who is the man behind the Ducks?

Carl Barks was born March 27, 1901 in eastern Oregon. His formal education lasted through the eighth grade and was obtained in a one-room school house. In 1916, he enrolled in a correspondence course in cartooning but soon gave it up due to the pressures of World War I. During those days, he worked as a farmer, logger, riveter, muleskinner, cowboy and printing press feeder, but he continued to draw. In the early 1930s, his cartoons appeared in such humor magazines as *The Calgary Eye-Opener* and *Judge*. In 1935, he joined the Disney Studios as an inbetweener and storyman. His inbetweens of a tap-dancing Mickey Mouse, done for the 1936 "Thru the Mirror," foreshadow the fluid suggestion of movement that is one of the hallmarks of his style.

A 1959 Barks 10-pager, "The Swimming Race," has Unca Donald trying to teach his nephews a lesson by challenging them to a swimming race; true to his character, Donald goes to elaborate lengths to win by cheating. This story originally appeared in *WDC & S* #190.

Photo: Edward Summer

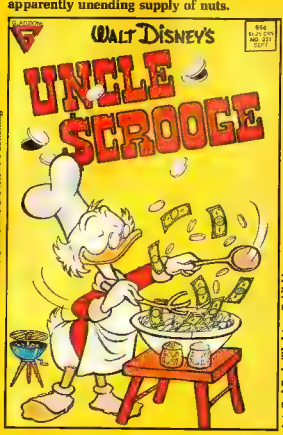
Carl Barks, the legendary Duckman, is an American treasure.



Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Barks created this cover for the original Dell *Uncle Scrooge* #3 (Sept. '53), featuring the story "Trouble from Long Ago" in which Scrooge is pitted against the villainous Chisel McSue in an adventure of lost treasure on the high seas. Currently, this cover appears on Gladstone's *Uncle Scrooge* #212, which includes three one-page Barks gags with Scrooge trying to wangle a bargain out of a 10¢ cup of coffee.

Another Scrooge character gag by Barks is the cover of Gladstone #221. Inside is Barks' 1956 story "The 'Colossalest Surprise' Quiz Show" and a one-page, no-dialogue Barks gem with a seemingly generous Scrooge feeding a squirrel an apparently unending supply of nuts.



Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

After "Pirate Gold" caught on, he wrote and drew "Donald Duck and the Mummy's Ring" in 1943, beginning his journey into the wonderful world of Ducks. Along the way, he created such notable residents of Duckburg as Uncle Scrooge, Gladstone Gander, Gyro Gearloose, Flintheart Glomgold, Magica de Spell, and the Beagle Boys.

"I know I was supposed to aim at about the 12-year-old level," Barks said in the Another Rainbow book *Mickey Mouse in Color*. "However, my opinion of a 12-year-old's intelligence was far higher than what the editors expected of a 12-year-old."

IT CAN'T BE, BUT IT IS! THERE ARE THE FOUR ROCKS IN A SQUARE! GOLDIE DUG IN TO MY CACHE!
I FORGOT THAT I BURIED THE NUGGETS ON THIS KNOLL! I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN A CAPSULE THIS MORNING!
SO UNCLE SCROOGE GOES HOME WITHOUT HIS GOLD!
I LOSE A FORTUNE — ALL BECAUSE I WOULDN'T TAKE A TEN CENT PILL!
LISTEN TO HIM RAVE! YOU'D THINK THE OLD MISER WOULD BE ASHAMED OF HIMSELF!

Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow

In "Back to the Klondike," a Scrooge treasure horde brings new luck to Glittering Goldie.

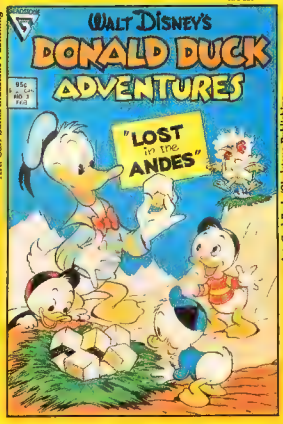
What makes Barks' material so distinctive? Like Charles Dickens, from whom he borrowed the name of his most popular character, Barks managed to infuse his stories with thought and substance, and in so doing, he single-handedly reshaped Donald's film persona. Instead of the irascible temper tantrum-throwing prankster, Barks molded him into a duck who could express a full range of emotions and feelings. Somehow, during this process, the humanity and humor of Barks himself seemed to magically transfer itself to the Ducks. His characters live and breath and think. They are not just clothed ideas or wooden chess pieces making the standard moves around the checkerboard of a tired plot.

His Duck family involves us on an emotional and intellectual level with their human faults and foibles. And if they can

Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Currently gracing Gladstone issue #228 of *Uncle Scrooge*, this Barks cover gives no clue to the story inside. Many Barks covers worked as full-page character gags. This issue's Barks story, "Chugwagon Derby," (originally in Dell's *Scrooge* #34, June 1961) is a clever reworking of a 1943 Barks story, "The Hard Loser," in which Donald and his nephews enter a no-holds-barred steeplechase.

"Lost in the Andes" was the cover story of *Dell 4-Color* #223, originally published in April 1949. This 32-page epic story (recently reprinted as Gladstone's *Donald Duck Adventures* #3) is Barks at his best. Deeply interested in the ways of man, his exotic tales are satires of the human condition.



Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Art: Carl Barks/Gladstone Publishing

Gladstone's *Donald Duck Adventures* #8 features a classic Barks cover for a modern Duck story by Don Rosa; the original cover appeared on *Dell 4-Color* #348 (Sept-Oct 1951). A number of very inferior Duck stories were ground out by Western, particularly after Barks turned his full time attention to *Uncle Scrooge* in 1952, so Gladstone's editors asked Rosa to create a new tale called "The Crocodile Collector."

Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow Publishing

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Art: Carl Barks/Copyright 1989 Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Another Rainbow Publishing Company

***The Making of a Fish Story*, another original Barks oil painting, recently sold for $75,000.**

sometimes exemplify our worst traits, they can also represent our best. Who can forget Uncle Scrooge's noble behavior in the 1953 tale, "Back to the Klondike," when he deliberately rigged it so that Glittering Goldie, his penniless old flame, could find his hidden cache of gold?

Barks refused to "write down" to his audience and he avoided the cliches.

When Barks retired in mid-June 1967, readers all over the world had been captivated by his witty interpretations of modern life, but few knew him by name. He was still the anonymous "good artist." It took the comic book renaissance of the 1970s to finally focus the spotlight of recognition on him.

As his fans began to seek him out, they requested oil paintings of the lively comic book covers he had done for so many of their favorite Duck stories. Barks complied, often charging modest fees for his efforts. However, as the demand increased, Another Rainbow began to publish high quality lithographic reproductions of his oils. In 1985, the reproduction of *In Uncle Walt's Collectery* sold for $395. Today, if a copy can be found on the secondary market, it frequently fetches $650 or more. The original painting was sold a few years ago for $75,000.

These rare animation drawings of Mickey Mouse were done by Barks for the 1936 film, "Thru the Mirror."

Art: Carl Barks

I was invited to meet Carl Barks at the offices of Another Rainbow when he stopped there to deliver his latest painting and sign a new batch of lithographs and posters. He is almost six feet tall, handsome and agile, almost to the point of being athletic. When the truck arrived to unload the half-ton of Barks lithographs and posters, Barks jumped up on the loading dock and we had all we could do to stop him from unloading the boxes himself!

He is still quite modest about the fact that his work has received such acclaim and that he now has more fans than ever. I mention that my favorite story is "A Christmas for Shacktown." "Oh, many people tell me that. My second favorite is 'Lost in the Andes!' But my most favorite is 'Island in the Sky.' "

As for the creative approach to composition that he uses in his paintings, "I start working small," he explains, indicating a size about six inches by six inches, "and spend many, many hours working out the composition. I do several drawings, and then I put paint on it. At that point, the whole composition changes because the Ducks almost always wear certain colors. The balance depends a lot upon where those colors fall. In my first sketches for *Return to Morgan's Island*, for example, I had Uncle Scrooge directly in the center. But it didn't work, so I had to change it."

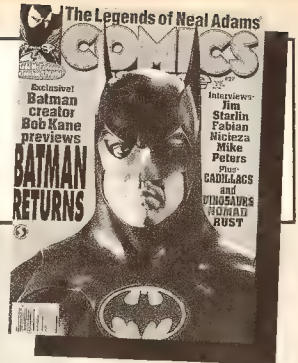
Paintings done by his wife, Gere, have been reproduced as cards by Leanin' Tree. "She does beautiful landscapes. Both of us used to do paintings for local art shows, but hers always outsold mine five to one," laughs Barks. "I used to do small humorous paintings that few people seemed to understand or appreciate. The problem she had with her paintings was that she used *too* much technique. So, I taught her composition and she taught me technique."

With the Ducks constantly on his mind, Barks confesses that he had always pictured Uncle Scrooge to be about 3¼ feet tall, including his top hat. Does he ever dream about them? "Yes," he admits. "All the time." Leaning in closer, and his eyes growing larger, he adds, "*Nightmares!*"

Well, Barks' Ducks certainly have not generated nightmares among his legions of admirers. If anything, they have done the opposite. His visual novels and short stories have transported readers to such undreamed-of places as the Kingdom of Hoopadoola, Itsa Faka and Plain Awful, giving fans the pleasure of meeting such characters as Philo T. Ellic, Sheik Hassan Ben Happi and the Phantom of Notre Duck.

Although Barks has often denied that his work contains any hidden messages, it is possible that his experiences with the loggers, welders and cowboys of his youth might have made a stronger impression on him than even he may have realized. "If they hadn't seen humor in their hard-bitten lives," he once commented to a fan, "they would have gone crazy. They had the ability to laugh at the most awesome miseries." Perhaps this is a clue to the deeper meaning of Carl Barks' work, that humor can and should be found in the worst of times as well as the best of times. ■

COMICS scene



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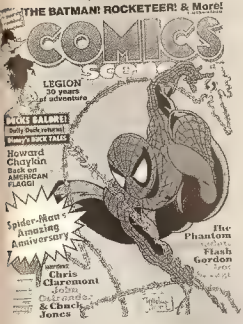

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Spirits

(continued from page 9)

said, 'Oh, God, this is so bad,' and my editor *begged* me to kill him, so we did. Pretty much the only character that's really around at this point is Blackout, and he's going to figure prominently in both books."

Other than Ghost Rider and Blaze, Mackie credits the two titles' illustrators as their most prominent figures. "I feel I've been so incredibly fortunate to work with the artists I've worked with, from Javier [Saltares, CS #12]—with whom I started *Ghost Rider*—through Mark [Texeira, CS #25], Ron Wagner and currently Andy Kubert, and Adam Kubert on *Spirits of Vengeance*. Andy's doing *Ghost Rider* for a while, and then someone else will take over, but I'm not at liberty to say who. Adam's the regular artist on *Spirits of Vengeance*, and both he and Andy have been great to work with. I've also worked with John Romita Jr. on *Hearts of Darkness*.

"I work very closely with the artists. I was doing it with Andy, I do it with Adam and I'm currently doing it with John Romita Jr. on a sequel to *Hearts of Darkness*. I've just been really very fortunate that I've worked with such great artists, and I think that's a very large part of *Ghost Rider*'s success."

With two Ghost Rider series and several related projects in the works, Mackie's fear of "becoming stale" recently prompted him to stop writing the Ghost Rider feature in *Marvel Comics Presents*. To keep himself in touch with the rest of the Marvel Universe, he's also currently scripting *Web of Spider-Man*, a character he says is "so far removed from Ghost Rider, that it was not only a challenge for me, but it really did cleanse the palate—the palate of the brain. It let me focus on somebody who wasn't saying, 'Innocent blood has been spilled!' "

Despite the abundance of Ghost Rider in Howard Mackie's life, the character and scribe show no signs of tiring. "There's more that I want to explore with the nature and origin of Ghost Rider. That's something he began questioning about himself in some earlier issues, which was about the same time I realized that the series was going to go on. In upcoming issues [of *Ghost Rider* and *Spirits of Vengeance*], both Ghost Rider and Dan Ketch will be pointed in a direction to start finding out his origins. Whether they'll get there in the forseeable future, I don't know yet. I'm letting the characters take me along for the ride."

Toons

(continued from page 29)

Daffy & Porky duel to the "William Tell Overture" as part of *Bugs Bunny's Overtures to Disaster.*

to give the "green light" to further theatrical shorts.

"The awareness is awakening over on the main lot, in terms of how well-loved the Looney Tunes characters are," she says. "It has been kind of a slumbering giant for a number of years, and they're finally starting to understand the characters' appeal."

"We're always developing new shorts. We're working on something now that we hope will see the light of day," Van Citters says. "But the development process is a slow one, and getting approval is even slower."

A lack of commitment by Warners has meant a lack of projects, resulting in a dwindling staff. With his crew leaving, Darrell Van Citters too has left the studio, though he's available to work for Warners again on a project-by-project basis. What remains of the Warner Bros. Classic Animation department will join the TV division in Sherman Oaks this August.

And so, the future of Looney Tunes depends on a vital factor: Audience response.

"Send letters to Warner Bros. saying you want new shorts," says Kathleen Helppie-Shipley. "It's hard to quantify how many people want to go to a theater to see new shorts. I think there's a tremendous amount of people who do. And I just think *any* support will help us to get Looney Tunes back on the big screen, which is where they belong."

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Bakshi

(continued from page 45)

on the axis of sex.

"I don't think there's an inordinate amount of sex in this film. You have a basic storyline in which a girl has to go to bed with a guy in order to become real. That's the point, that's the conflict. You can't avoid it. But I don't think we have any more sexuality than *Roger Rabbit* did, and what sex we have I think is done in good taste."

Cool World, at least on the surface, appears to be a relatively clear idea. Bakshi, however, sidesteps the notion that his idea alone has any merit.

"It's a good idea, but ideas are cheap and a dime a dozen. What's important is how you work the film and how you and the animators make it evolve. The idea of *Cool World* is one thing. But the animation is what will make or break this film."

DC Comics thought enough of Bakshi's idea to turn it into a comic book series, published this spring, which is actually a prequel to the movie. And while he "got a kick" out of doing the cover for the first issue, he hasn't read it. He's basically happy to leave well enough alone.

"They came to me and wanted me to review the scripts and the artwork. I said no. My feeling is that the guys who make comics should make comics and that I shouldn't be the one to pass judgment on what they're doing. I don't like it when people interfere with my animation, so I wasn't about to mess with their comics."

The animator says he has a number of potential projects coming up, but only one he's willing to even talk about. "It's called *The City*. It's a very strange futuristic thing. And it's *all* animation."

Ralph Bakshi turns philosophical as he attempts to put his career in perspective: "I don't really know if I've had any effect on the animation industry," he reflects. "That's not for me to say. It has always been hard being an animator. When I started in this business in the '70s, animators in general were considered outsiders and, with the types of films I made, I was considered an outsider in an outside medium. It's much more of a respected occupation these days, but that hasn't made it easier for me.

"All I've ever wanted was the money to do things right. I want to take the ideas I have in my head and get them out there with a sense of aesthetic quality. I'm not really worried about what comes after *Cool World*. I feel I have many more films in me to make and, all things being equal, I'll get the chance to make them."

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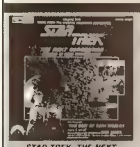

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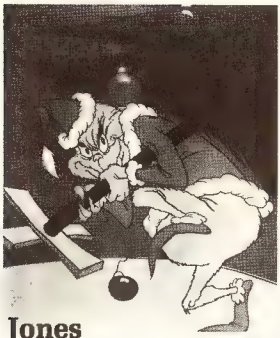


Jones

(continued from page 62)

Photo: CBS

quotation that you can never step twice into the same stream.

"We never do a thing exactly the same twice," he adds philosophically. "One of the wonderful things to me about watching children's behaviors is how inaccurate they are. When a child runs around a post, he either clears it by 10 feet or runs into it."

Aside from his consulting work on *Roger Rabbit* as well as commercials (among them an award-winning series of beer ads in England), Jones has put down his pencil and picked up a brush. His paintings of the Warner Bros. characters have been commanding between $3,500-4,000 a piece, "and they've been *selling*," he adds, a bit surprised.

He's also working on re-creating limited editions of the original animation cels that, their value unknown at the time, were burned by Warner Bros. (These prints are available at selected art galleries—including NYC's T.R.'s Gallery. For further information, contact Linda Jones Enterprises, 789 W. 20th Street, Costa Mesa, CA 92627.)

Another stop, this spring, will be England, where he'll lecture at the BBC and British Film Institute.

All in all, Jones remains as active as his most renowned character, hopping from one stop to the next. He's happy to have a chance to discuss the Warner Bros. tradition now that most of his compatriots are gone.

It represents an era that, perhaps belatedly, has earned its own place in animation history. Proof may be that videocassette compilations of the cartoons have gone gold in terms of sales, Jones' being among the leaders. While he doesn't receive any royalties for those sales and rentals, Chuck Jones nonetheless takes pride that the work is still seen and savored. And, with his usual apomb, he downplays the gold sales plateau. "If it did," he says modestly, "it's because I've got a big family. After all, there are a lot of Joneses." ■

Morrow

(continued from page 58)

and were putting her in the backgrounds when she wasn't even in the script! Still nothing, no one noticed. We had Martha appear *everywhere*. Our big finale, the one thing we thought would do it was when the Indians charged a fort, a big Sioux uprising. There amongst the Indians was Martha riding a charger, waving a spear and wearing her bonnet! It was printed and they *never* said a word. That charade went on for almost a year."

In recent years, Morrow has had to overcome the perception that he isn't a superhero artist. "Most publishers don't think of me as such. This past year, it was a surprise and pleasure to do Batman. I had been approached about doing Batman years ago, more than once. It was a cocky attitude on my part that responded with, 'Yes, I'll do him, but in my own way.' I said I was going to put eyeballs in his mask and wrinkles in his tights. They said they would see me later.

"A while back, there was a DC book [*Heroes Against Hunger*] where the proceeds went towards world hunger. Since they considered this a throwaway item, they let me do Batman. I drew him with the wrinkles and eyeballs and it got printed that way. Occasionally, I would have to draw him in a cameo on some other strip but someone would always white-out the eyes. Apparently, they perceived this as a lack of reverence for the character on my part. I colored and inked the Batcave story for the 1989 *Christmas with the Superheroes* and inked Michael Bair's pencils for the 1989 *Batman Annual*. They left the eyes in," he notes.

By keeping pace with his *Tarzan* strip, his work on the Powerline characters in their own title and Epic's *Critical Mass*, his efforts on this year's *Star Trek Annual*, and coming full circle with *Cracked* parodies and their *Monsters Attack!* horror book, his days remain full. And after years and years of voluminous output, Gray Morrow finds today's industry more challenging and exciting than ever. "I'm happy the industry has gone the way it has. It has opened up so that almost anything goes. If it's commercial, fine, we'll print it. If it works, fine. If not, we'll try something else. We *never* had that freedom when I broke into the business. Today, maybe 90 percent of it will be dreck and forgotten. But who knows what can come out of it? Simply put, I love comics. Unreservedly." ©

Art: H.L. Parkhurst
Courtesy Will Murray

Bat

(continued from page 17)

was paid for what I did and that's all there was to it. I had no rights to the thing, no copyright. Everything was up to the publisher. If they wanted to promote it, they could have. But they never did."

However, in another bizarre twist of fate, the Black Bat later found greater success overseas than he did in America. When the German publisher Pabel decided to reprint the occasional Black Bat novel in their weekly *Kriminal-Roman* series, they discovered *Die Schwarzen Fledermaus*, as he was known in German, was so popular that in 1962, they retitled the weekly as *Fledermaus* and dropped the alternate characters.

"They took *all* of the Black Bats," Daniels explains, "and word for word, character for character, reprinted them. And when they exhausted those, they had writers do originals. They tell me—I can't believe it—they did *900* of them."

The German Black Bat was only slightly changed. Tony Quinn became a Chicago lawyer and in one 1967 novel, married Carol Baldwin. The series was modernized for the sexy 1960s, as the American-style titles like *H-Bombe in Blond*, *Playboys u. Blondinen* and *Der Killer kam im Smoking* suggest.

Not owning the copyright, Daniels received no royalties for the German incarnation of his character. He received no credit, either. The original series had appeared under the house pseudonym of G. Wayman Jones, which in Germany became G.W. Jones. Later, American-sounding pseudonyms like Fred Treath and Jerry Ford were appended to the series, which ran well into the 1970s and might even be going today.

Why did the Black Bat continue to hold his audience as the shadow of Batman gradually eclipsed him? Even the man who created him isn't sure.

"I couldn't put a finger on that," Norman Daniels admits. "I really don't know. I suppose it just hit the kids in the right way. It lasted for 11 years, so it must have been fairly good." ©

CONVERSATIONS IN JUDGMENT

Batman meets Judge Dredd. Alan Grant & Simon Bisley deliver the verdict.

By STAN NICHOLLS

Four years after its conception, and surrounded by an avalanche of hype, Judgement on Gotham *finally appeared in late 1991. Teaming Batman and Judge Dredd, two of today's most popular comic characters, the graphic novel is the first joint offering from DC and Britain's Fleetway.*

Why the delay? Given the level of fan and corporate expectations, the powers-that-be wanted to be extra sure they picked a creative team capable of bringing it off.

The careful selection paid off. Judgement on Gotham *was scripted by* Dredd *veterans John Wagner and Alan Grant, and illustrated by Simon Bisley. Grant (previously profiled in CS #16-17) joined Bisley for these conversations in judgment.*

COMICS SCENE: Did you work to a tight schedule on the book?

SIMON BISLEY: The schedule was *very* tight, which was a bit worrying. It was a high-pressure job. For years, people had been waiting for this thing, and it was on my shoulders to get it finished.

ALAN GRANT: As far as the writing was concerned, it took John Wagner and I quite a bit longer than we anticipated. The original plot we came up with involved Judge Dredd and Batman battling each other much more than in the final version; it was a kind of Justice versus Law thing. That was approved by [editors] Denny O'Neil at DC and Steve MacManus at Fleetway. But when John and I sat down to actually write the thing, it was a real effort. We spent a couple of weeks trying to work this story up into a script before we said, "To hell with it."

***Judgement* artist Simon Bisley has always liked Batman "visually, at least."**

CS: What was wrong it?

GRANT: It had all-new villains who hadn't been seen in any comic before, but they weren't very funny characters, so we went back to the old villains to give the story humor, which we considered a very important element. For instance, when you see Scarecrow for the first time, he's inside the Gotham City morgue. He has a drill and he's boring into the skulls of corpses to drain off their brain fluids for some concoction he's making.

BISLEY: We're all laughing at that, but it's not funny, is it? It's shocking. Well, isn't it? Think of a kid picking the book up and saying, "Hey, Dad, look at this guy drinking gunk out of dead people's heads." [*Dissolves in giggles.*] Well, maybe it's the sort of thing that appeals to the British sense of humor...

CS: You were working with two big companies in their first collaboration and two high-profile characters. Did any of this present problems?

BISLEY: It was difficult in respect to giving each character their bit, as it were. For example, the editor would say, "There's not enough Batman on this page, there's more Dredd; let's have them equalized." But Alan and John overcame much of that in the script. The cover took a long time to conceive because we couldn't do anything too obscure. It had to be commercial. We were ages trying to work that out. Actually, I would have been quite happy with simply "Judgement on Gotham," on a black cover, with the words embossed. It would have been just as powerful, if not more so.

GRANT: We didn't have much trouble with either DC or Fleetway.

CS: Did you have any difficulty in respect to your creative interpretation of the characters?

GRANT: At one point only, and it was something we should have known. In the first scene, Batman encounters Judge Death and they have a fight. Now, Judge Death's gimmick is that he can't be killed, but Batman doesn't know that and actually kills his body and looses his spirit. Denny O'Neil quite rightly wasn't happy at having Batman kill a character before he knew that the guy couldn't be killed, if you see what I mean. Batman does *not* kill that's one of his things. Dredd kills without thinking twice.

CS: Do you see any similarities between Batman and Dredd?

BISLEY: I'm not aware of similarities.

GRANT: The differences between them are greater than the similarities. The similarity is that they're both really tough. The difference is that Batman has a heart, whereas Dredd *doesn't.* Dredd obeys the law, whether the law is right or wrong; Batman tries to serve the interests of justice. He tries to be fair.

BISLEY: He's a goody-goody, a sort of knight in shining armor.

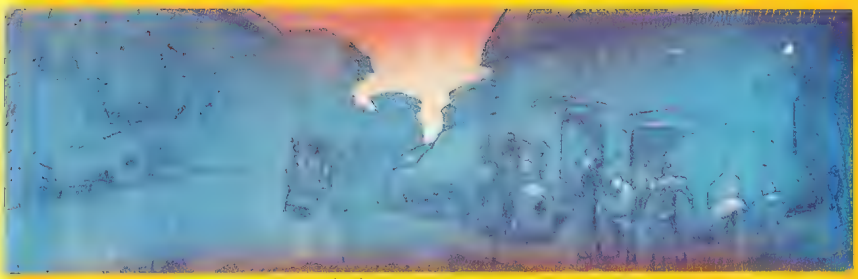
GRANT: Yeah, Batman's a goody-goody; Dredd's the kind of thug you hire as a bouncer. But I think that in a straight fight, no weapons, Batman would beat Dredd. He's driven by an inner demon Dredd doesn't have.

CS: Do you have any affection for either of them?

BISLEY: I used to dislike Dredd intensely, but the more I worked on him, the more I started to like the guy. I've always liked Batman—visually at least. He's very theatrical and dramatic, with the billowing cloak and big horns and everything. He's great.

GRANT: Batman has been my favorite character since I was five or six years old. I've written Judge Dredd for more than 10 years, but I dislike him. He's not a nice guy. I enjoy writing stories about Dredd, because it's great writing about anybody who

YOU CALL THAT JUSTICE?
SLAM!
NOT JUST A TECHNICALITY NOW, DREDD! JUDGE ASSAULT: TEN YEARS!
OOF!
THUD-D!
HACK...! TWENTY!
DENEY! YOU KEEP BREAKING THE LAW... I'LL KEEP COUNTING!
THE HELL WITH YOUR LAW!
BREAK THEM UP!



The Dark Knight may be Gotham City's protector, but he's in for a different reception in Mega-City One.

gets away with the sort of stuff he does, but there's no way I could feel affection for him.

CS: Does that feeling feed back into your treatment of him?

GRANT: I don't think so. You need to read the story and see. Remember, I wasn't the sole writer on it; John Wagner and I wrote it in collaboration, and John is the *definitive* guy when it comes to Dredd.

BISLEY: He *is* Judge Dredd. I think if you're really close to a character for some years, your personality's bound to rub off on that character.

GRANT: Yeah. Dredd is quite heavily modeled on how John sees himself. Or, on how John would *like* to be.

CS: To what extent did the illustrations feed back into the words, and vice versa? Is yours a very symbiotic relationship?

BISLEY: With *Lobo* [Bisley and Grant's DC character], the creative process *is* symbiotic, because it's spontaneous; it goes back and forth. But with *Judgement on Gotham*, there was no time to do that, and I kept very tightly to the script.

GRANT: It was all broken down into panels with descriptions and dialogue. On *Lobo*, we start with a plot and Simon does the pencils. Then, I come back with the dialogue and he inks it. Anything extra he wants to add, he just puts in. If I'm working with a new artist, I put a sentence in the script saying, "This is the way I see it. If you see it differently, do it however you want, as long as it tells the same story." That's built in, particularly with Simon, because I was familiar with what he did for *Lobo* and what he added to that from the original vision. He brought another dimension to it.

BISLEY: Lobo's a great character because he'll do something like put on a dress and walk into a bar to get a reaction. Then, if anyone comments, he wraps his chain around their head!

CS: On the subject of violence: Judge Dredd has been criticized on this score. Is violence in your work performing some kind of cathartic function for you? In other words, if you two weren't comic creators, would you be out mugging little old ladies?

BISLEY: No, no, no. We're just the same as everybody else. I think we've all got violence in us, haven't we? But I can't *depict* violence unless it's tongue-in-cheek. I couldn't, for instance, do a woman getting stabbed and having blood all over the place. That's too real. On the other hand, two outsize, muscular guys in costumes beating the crap out of each other is funny.

GRANT: As far as real-life violence is concerned, I'm really squeamish. I can't watch those TV programs with doctors performing operations; I can't look at car accidents and stuff like that. It makes me physically ill. But violence in comics isn't really violence at all. It's between characters that don't exist. Anyway, I don't write just violence. I try to write *humorous* violence. The two have got to be together. For example, when Batman gets captured in Mega-City One by Dredd, he protests his innocence, so the judges move in with their day sticks and give him a good working-over. If that happened to someone in real life, it would kill him. But an hour later, Batman's up and escaping.

CS: A word about your working methods. Are you very schematic in the way you put a comic together?

GRANT: I'm not. In fact, at heart I guess I'm actually a verbal storyteller rather than a written storyteller. Comics are just my way of doing it. Had I been born 2,000 years ago, I would have been telling stories around the campfire when the darkness was pressing in and the demons were gathering.

I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE... THE MASK... THE COSTUME... THE WEAPONS... YOU KNOW WHAT I SMELL?
I SMELL VIGILANTE.
AND I DON'T LIKE VIGILANTES!
IS THERE ANY CHANCE I COULD SPEAK TO SOMEONE WITH A LITTLE INTELLIGENCE?
SOMEBODY LOOKIN' FOR ME?

Judge Anderson wasn't the only mediator when it came to giving Batman and Dredd equal time. (By the way, they purposely spell the title *Judgement*.)

All Gotham Art: Copyright 1991 Fleetway Publications Ltd. & DC Comics Inc.

"Batman's a goody-goody, a sort of knight in shining armor," notes the artist.

All Batman & Associated Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1991 DC Comics Inc.

Earlier-conceived *Judgements* offered more Batman/Dredd fights. "It was a Justice vs. Law thing," reveals Grant.

BISLEY: That's interesting, because when I illustrate what you've written, I think I'm doing something similar; I'm just hearing the characters speak. I'm not really interested in what's going on around them.

CS: Alan, it was intriguing to learn that you once wanted to be a minister.

GRANT: I didn't want to be, although I did go to a college of divinity, yes. It's an involved story, but basically, I wanted to waste a few more years in college, so I put in for the ministry. I didn't complete the course. But I think I would have made a great minister. After four years' study, I would have gotten a car and a manse. Not to mention ecclesiastical groupies. I was quite looking forward to it.

CS: Did Christianity play into this?

BISLEY: I'm meticulous in the sense that if I have the opportunity, I'll fully render a strip; that's to say I mold it until it becomes crisper and more photographic. But inevitably, I'm not going to have the time, so it's going to be a compromise to a certain extent. You try to make the artwork as best you can, obviously, but when you're working to a really tight schedule, it can look a bit tatty around the edges towards the end. So, what I do now is work backwards. I do the last 10 pages first, then go back and do the middle section again.

CS: Many creators of fantastic subjects talk about needing to suspend their own disbelief before they can convey that to their readers. Are your stories "real" to you?

BISLEY: It's real for me. Not literally real, but I like the idea of these things happening. I've got a lot of conviction when I'm doing it. When reading a script, you get involved, almost like watching a TV soap. You get quite tangled up with the characters, you know? They become a part of you when you're working on them. If Judge Dredd walked in this room now, I really wouldn't be shocked. To put it simply, you're enjoying it, so you *believe* in it.

GRANT: It's exactly the same with writing. If you're not into it, you usually end up with something boring. It's impossible to write a humorous story, for example, unless you can laugh at it yourself. John Wagner and I, when we write together, really get into the parts. We do the dialogue before the scene descriptions, which is opposite to the way comics generally function. We work more like it's a radio play or something. John takes one part and I take the other. On *Judgement*, he took the part of Judge Dredd and read his dialogue in a really *deep*, Dreddian voice, and I tried to do the same for Batman. We acted it out like a piece of theater. With humorous writing, that's a big asset.

New villains were conceived for *Judgement*, but it was decided that the Scarecrow and Judge Death made for a more effective story.

All Gotham Art: Simon Bisley

The writer notes that in addition to the Batmobile, the Dark Knight has an inner demon driving him.

GRANT: It didn't come into it at all because I'm not a Christian.
BISLEY: Good grief, it gets worse.
CS: So, we shouldn't look for any Christian subtext in your work?
GRANT: There is *no* Christian subtext running through my work. In fact, when I was doing the *Demon* series for DC, I made one of the principal characters a born-again Christian who ended up in Hell. His line was, "How can I possibly be in Hell? I'm a born-again Christian." But they made me write it out.
BISLEY: Anything religious in comics is always a *very* touchy subject.
GRANT: I don't have a problem with that. At the end of the day, the publisher's taking the financial risk. If he says, "Get that Christian out of there," you've got no option.
BISLEY: In *Judgement*, I originally had Batman wearing an inverted cross. But it had to go. I thought it was appropriate because the book is sort of heavy-metal oriented. And Batman's very demonic; he looks like the bloody devil incarnate. He appeals to the thrashers, the meatheads, the dustbinheads and the engineheads. It has to be heavy metal if we're talking in musical terms, hasn't it? In fact, I tend to work with pretty hard stuff playing on the sound system.
CS: Are you optimistic about the state of the comics business at the moment?
GRANT: I am *not* optimistic, because the industry is becoming increasingly marketing-led. Putting something out with five different covers on it is *not* bringing new people into the market; that only appeals to the hardcore collectors who have to buy five copies of the same book so they've got a complete collection.
BISLEY: There's nothing wrong with that.
GRANT: I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it.
BISLEY: So what's the problem? It makes you money, it makes me money, it makes the companies money.
GRANT: In the short term, it works, but in the long term, you're going to end up with half-a-million comic fans buying 10 copies of everything, and sooner or later, they're all going to say, "We're getting ripped off here." What I would rather see than five different versions of *X-Men* or *Batman* is five new comics utilizing the talents of new creators.

Judge Death's phobias were just one of *Judgement*'s more humorous elements.

All Judge Dredd & Associated Characters Trademark & Copyright 1991 Fleetway Publications Ltd

THOUGHT BALLOONS

Frank Miller's Dark Knight Dreams

One reason comic books have earned unprecedented media attention is due to Frank Miller. He has revitalized such longtime characters as Daredevil and Batman. He has experimented with new forms of graphic storytelling (like Ronin*). And he has championed the works of other storytellers (like Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's* Lone Wolf & Cub *& various Japanese manga), all while standing against the specter of censorship. And always, Frank Miller has something to say.*

COMICS SCENE: As the writer/artist of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, how great has the impact of that title been on comics directed at grownups?

FRANK MILLER: It's hard to tell, because a number of other sophisticated comics started coming out at roughly the same time. There was Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*, there was my *Dark Knight*, there was my and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Elektra: Assassin*. There were several other things that jarred the whole industry and garnered, as a whole, a new level of attention. You might say that in 1986, American comics went through what they had already gone through in Europe and Japan, which is that comics entered into an adolescence. The word is spreading throughout America that comics can do much more than Saturday-morning-cartoon kinds of stories. In the case of *Dark Knight*, I think it was the fact that I was using such an old, revered superhero, Batman, that got it so much publicity, because I was doing such unusual things with the character. But the publicity for comics has been enormous.

The obscenity bust [at Friendly Frank's of Lansing, Illinois, a store since closed] has everything to do with the sort of shock that's spreading as far as comics being something new. A couple of cops came into that comics shop and bought some old undergrounds that were being held behind the counter so little kids couldn't get to

Art: Frank Miller/Klaus Janson/Colors: Lynn Varley

Art: Frank Miller/Klaus Janson/Colors: Lynn Varley

Art: Bill Sienkiewicz

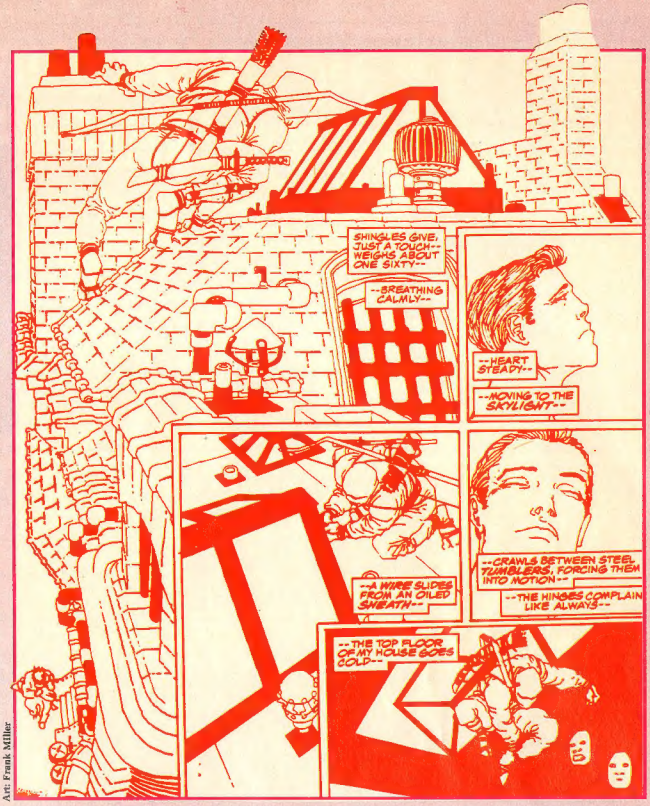
With his much-delayed *Elektra* Graphic Novel, Miller will continue to haunt the boundaries of comics as he resurrects his ninja warrior for a ghostly tale.

them. Through a series of circumstances that were pretty odd and confusing, somehow the shop manager got convicted for obscenity charges. The comics in question, most of them around 20 years old, are generally revered by aficionados of comics as some of the finest examples of comic art, Robert Crumb's in particular.

So, their targets were comic books that *weren't* written for little kids, that *aren't* sold to little kids, that have *nothing to do* with little kids. But since they're in a pamphlet and they have pictures in little panels with word balloons coming out of them, they naturally assumed they had to be kid stuff. Even Garry Trudeau's accomplishments have impressed some people on how flexible the art form is.

CS: There has always been a division in this country between comic strips and comic books.

MILLER: There's a specific difference between comic strips and comic books. A strip is generally no more than eight frames long, and a comic book is a pamphlet or book that holds page after page of extended stories. The comic book is much the more flexible form, one that is capable of conveying much more complicated stories and much more involved ideas. But the main separation between them is a business one. Comic strips have always been affiliated with newspapers, and there have been no restrictions as far as them being for little kids. Comic books, on the other hand, were put together by some pretty low-level businessmen who never really believed in them to begin with and sold them out every chance they got. From the '50s on, comics were sold down the river to McCarthy types. It's one of the reasons comics have been regarded for so long as kid stuff in America, while regarded as a genuine story form in other countries.


SHINGLES GIVE JUST A TOUCH-- WEIGHS ABOUT ONE SIXTY--
--BREATHING CALMLY--
--HEART STEADY--
--MOVING TO THE SKYLIGHT--
--A WIRE SLIDES FROM AN OILED SHEATH--
--CRAWLS BETWEEN STEEL TUMBLERS, FORCING THEM INTO MOTION--
--THE HINGES COMPLAIN LIKE ALWAYS--
--THE TOP FLOOR OF MY HOUSE GOES COLD--

Art: Frank Miller

Elektra Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1987, 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group

There's something that should have been patently obvious from the beginning: Comics is a story form, not a genre, not a single little business with a single little audience, at least that's not all it should be. What has happened over the past few years is that a new audience has emerged—different people who grew up reading comics and stuck with them. People like me. Some of us started doing them and many of us kept reading them, and the work of writers like Alan Moore and artists like Bill Sienkiewicz and others exploded out of this very congested, incestuous business comics have been since the '50s.

"The word is spreading throughout America that comics can do much more than Saturday-morning-cartoon kinds of stories," says the author of *Elektra: Assassin*.

CS: Do you see the Friendly Frank's case as the opening wedge in a new wave of censorship directed at comics?

MILLER: I think it conceivably could be, for two main reasons. I think that it's really up to the people who make the comics to turn this around. I hate to keep beating this point to death, but the first reason is that the comic book publishers are cowards who don't believe in what they're publishing. Most of them, that is, the ones that have been publishing the longest time. The second reason is that censors are a really despicable lot. They'll always use children as an excuse, poor children being in danger, in order to obtain their power over what's being printed or being seen.

Children have *nothing* to do with their goals; children have nothing to do with the goals of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell and the rest. *Power* is all they're after. And this case in Lansing, Illinois, where a stupid decision was made in a heavily Fundamentalist small town, could encourage others to come out of the woodwork. That's one of the dangers in publicizing it. On the other hand, I think that the people doing comic books right now—the people writing and drawing them—believe in what they're doing enough to fight for it.

CS: Why should an adult who has never looked at comics since he or she was 10 years old pick up a comic book today?

MILLER: Because there are some very good stories being written in comics. Comics are capable of everything novels are, everything film is. It's a very different read, but I think that what you'll find that's happening right now in comics is exciting; it's the growth of a very vital art form, and it's also a great deal of fun.

—*Bill Warren*

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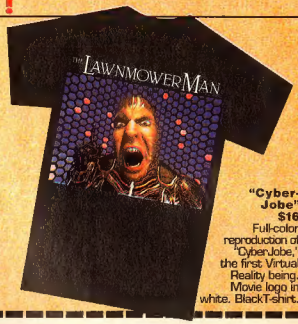

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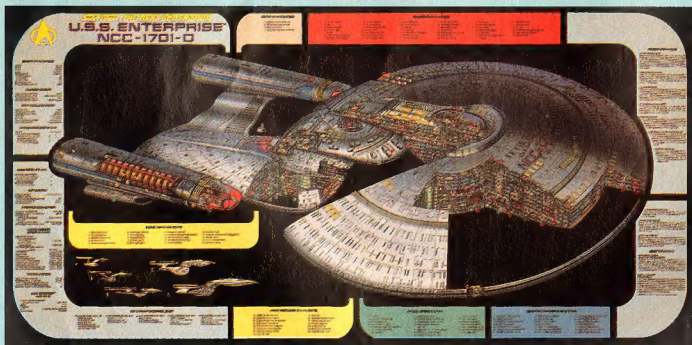

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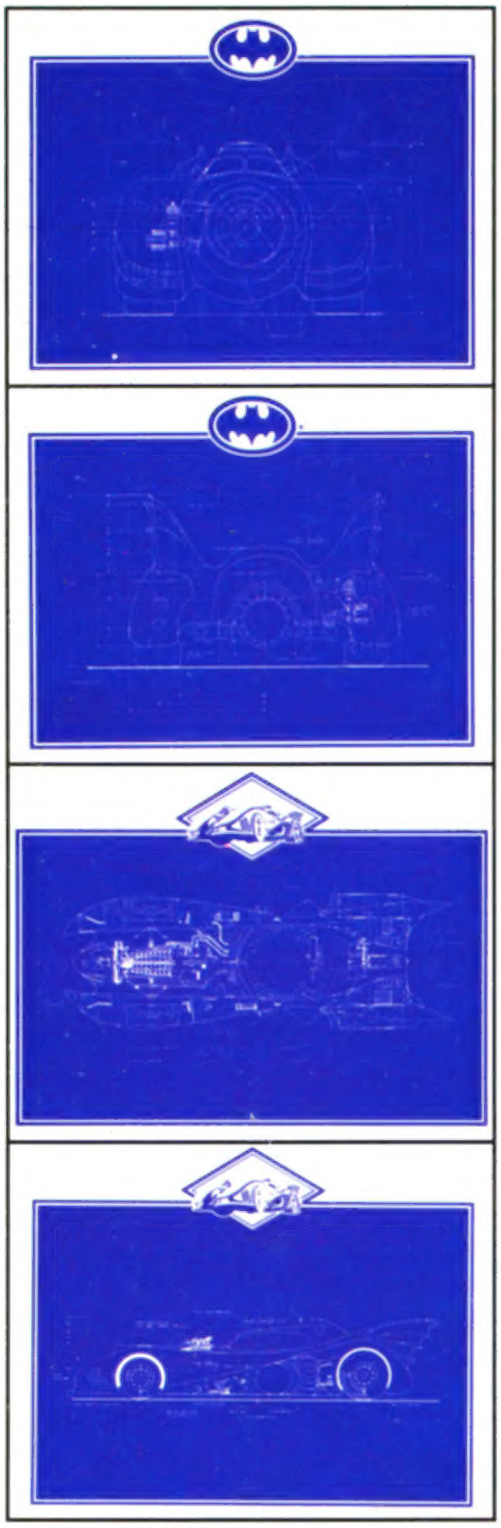

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a.

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1.

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